



Avon Gardens Trust

# Bulletin

AUTUMN 2015

## *Farewell to our Patrons*

### **Tony and Nancy Garrett**

Seven years after graciously agreeing to become patrons of Avon Gardens Trust, Tony and Nancy Garrett have decided to stand down, although they will continue to be members of the Trust. Many of us will remember the visit in 2007 to Marlwood Grange near Thornbury, their then home.



*Nancy Garrett and Ros Delany cutting our birthday cake at the AGM in 2012*

When time permitted they would join us on visits such as West Harptree Court and Royal Victoria Park and they helped us celebrate our 25th birthday at Goldney in 2012 on that memorable sunny afternoon.

They subsequently moved to central Bath which enabled them to be helpful and proactive with the Annual Conference

that was organised and hosted in 2012 by the Trust for the national Association of Gardens Trusts. Tony and Nancy were equally supportive and they really helped to make the weekend such great fun for the delegates. They are both good company and this is illustrated by the fact that the outgoing Chairman of the national Association, Sally Walker asked me if she could sit next to Nancy at the Conference dinner as quote 'Nancy is such good fun'. I have a particular memory of Tony with his lovely sense of humour charming the redoubtable Gilly Drummond, the President of the national Association, at the same Conference Dinner which is no mean feat.

On a final note, on the Saturday morning of the Conference, there were about 100 of us in the Deer Hall at Badminton having coffee, chatting and looking forward to the talk by John Harris. Nancy had kindly agreed to introduce him, she stood up and either Gilly Drummond or Sally Walker noticed the petite frame of Nancy and immediately offered to get her a microphone as the noise levels in the room were very high. Nancy said she would be fine, to which there was a dubious 'are you sure'.

Of course, what they did not know was all that BBC radio experience from being a reporter on *The World at One* with fellow colleagues Sue McGregor and Margaret Howard would come to the fore and this well-modulated, clear voice cut through the noise and all went very quiet. It was a lovely moment.

As Patrons they both have been very supportive and those who have met them have enjoyed their company. On behalf of all of us who are part of Avon Gardens Trust, thank you to them both for having been our Patrons.

*Ros Delany*

**Avon Gardens Trust events for 2016: see page 19**



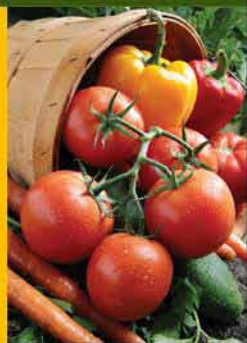
# Riverside

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# Chairman's Welcome

Despite being a rather dismal summer weather-wise, 2015 will be remembered by those who attended some or all of our events as the year when we had sunshine for every visit which must surely be a 'first'?

From the coach trip to Hellens and The Laskett, both of which were bathed in glorious spring sunshine, through to the recent study day at Kings Weston on a mellow autumnal day when the panoramic views opened up before us, umbrellas and weatherproof clothing were not required. Let us hope our luck continues for next year as we have already organised our four visits.

Our final event for 2016 will be a finger buffet lunch followed by a lecture. Dates and brief details for all these events can be found at the back of the *Bulletin*.

Of course, garden visits are not the only activity the Trust is involved with but arguably they are the most sociable and give the opportunity for members to meet new people who have similar interests.

I look forward to meeting many of you at forthcoming events.

*Ros Delany*

## In Memory of Patrick Taylor

Patrick, who died on May 29, was a pioneering and loyal member of the Avon Gardens Trust committee, recruited not only for his knowledge of gardens but for his business acumen. He was an established writer, photographer and publisher, and became responsible for producing the Trust's *Newsletters*. There was little funding, and he was tireless in seeking sponsorship to support twice-yearly editions. These modest but well-edited publications recorded the range of the Trust's activities, and Patrick's irrepressible enthusiasm persuaded some well-known people in the developing subject of parks and historic gardens to contribute articles.

David Lambert, also a founder member, recalls that enthusiasm and drive which led to the publication in 1994 of *Parks and Gardens of Avon*. Stewart Harding and David wrote the text, and the book was designed and splendidly produced by Patrick and his wife, Caroline. David says that having it printed in Hong Kong seemed, at the time, 'an exotic way to save money'. It remains a landmark publication.

Although Patrick was busy travelling to visit and photograph gardens for articles and books, he missed very few of our meetings in Bristol, driving from his home in Wells. I remember him as always ready to help with events, and at one

AGM he was a gallant escort to our patron, the Duchess of Beaufort. When Patrick moved away to deeper Somerset, he was certainly missed. Members may well have come across his lively personal writing and splendid photographs in The Garden or may possess one of his many garden books and guides. It is good news that his archive of several thousand images of gardens in the UK, Europe and America is with the RHS Lindley Library.

*Peggy Stembridge*



## A Note on our finances

The Accounts for the year to 31st March 2015 were included in the Summer *Bulletin*. This note sets out something of their context. In outline, our receipts of £4,818 (including £700 from the Chew Stoke Open Gardens) exceeded our running costs by £2,740.

Our intention is to make £3,000 available each year for our charitable activities, and this would normally lead to a reduction in AGT funds of some £1,500 each year. In the event, income was higher than usual, and charitable expenditure of only £2,520 led to an increase of £220 in our funds, which now stand at £27,018.

The Committee is making the AGT better known as a grant making body in the fields of gardening and conservation, and hopes to meet the £3,000 target in future.

*Tony Merriman, Treasurer*

## Pier Pressure

The top ten most endangered Victorian and Edwardian buildings in England and Wales in 2015 were revealed by the Victorian Society in September. All in the list are nationally important listed buildings at real risk of being lost if action is not taken in the immediate future. National exposure from inclusion in the Society's top ten often leads to new interest in buildings which can help save them.

The 2015 list includes Birnbeck Pier in Weston-super-Mare, the only pier in Britain built around an island, which is now on the verge of collapse.

The work of naval architect and engineer Eugenius Birch, the pier opened in 1867 both as a landing for Bristol Channel steamers and for a variety of seaside amusements. As 'HMS Birnbeck' it was used for secret weapons development and testing by the Admiralty during WWII. Post war, competition with Weston's Grand Pier saw a gradual

decline accelerated by accident and storm damage until it closed in 1994. Successive owners' restoration plans have come to nothing. Even the RNLI's lifeboat station on the island closed after 131 years as access had become too dangerous.



Pip Meddleton

Current owner, CNM Estates, says it is committed to fixing the pier and is working with the Birnbeck Regeneration Trust (BRT). However, storms earlier this year have left one walkway in a perilous state. The Society urges North Somerset Council to work with the pier's owner and the BRT to quickly establish a planning brief for development before it is too late.

Details of the 2015 top ten and news updates about buildings on last year's list are on the Victorian Society's website:

[www.victoriansociety.org.uk](http://www.victoriansociety.org.uk)

More information the work of the BRT at [www.birnbeckregenerationtrust.org.uk](http://www.birnbeckregenerationtrust.org.uk)



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# Summer Visits

## Open Garden at Little Naish, Clapton in Gordano

**Sunday 21 June**

History came to Little Naish on Sunday 21st June. Anne and Peter Hills opened their garden and in the sunshine, among those strolling round, were several people with previous connections to the site, a site which dates back to the 14th century.

Over 200 people - members, their friends, residents from North Somerset and further afield - came to enjoy the afternoon.

On arrival, visitors first encountered the listed tower with the attractive residential extensions the Hills have made, alongside original outbuildings. Moving on, the space opened out to what were the walled kitchen gardens used to supply the needs of the family, their guests and servants at Naish House estate in the 17th and 18th centuries.



Peter Jones

Peter Hills

Anne and Peter Hills' hard work over the last three years is apparent; discovering and retaining interesting plants while clearing unwanted vegetation, there is now a friendly atmosphere with lots to see throughout the garden.

Visitors enjoyed the rich diversity of the herbaceous borders, the kitchen garden; fruit trees with cherries, apples, pears, figs



Peter Jones



Peter Jones

and damsons; bushes of soft fruit with currants, gooseberries and later blackberries to harvest. Beyond this, the wildflower 'meadow', the pond, many shrubs and a grove of hazels and viburnum trees. A magnificent Rambling Rector climbing rose, with its companion Constance Spry, looked stunning against the grey stone walls.

From October to March, the garden hosts a variety of bulbs including cyclamens. Anne has built up a collection of 63 different varieties of Achillea, possibly heading for a National Collection. Visitors enjoyed chatting to each other not only while admiring the plants, but over a cup of tea with home made cake.



Peter Jones

Someone who had worked on the recent renovations came with his family to see how the building site had been transformed. History really came alive when the grandson of the owner during the early 1920s to 1958 came down from Tortworth with

his wife to show her where he had spent time in his youth. Anne and Peter have enjoyed researching the site and finding former occupants, so meeting new people that afternoon opened up further areas of information; a lady and her husband who were friends with the owners and visited frequently from 1959 to 1969; a neighbour who lived nearby forty years ago shared her experiences of the owners of Little Naish during the 1970s.

Someone who is researching the Bristol history of slavery is returning in the autumn to discuss James Adam Gordon who inherited the estate in 1824. Relevant documents are being sent over from the archives at Clevedon Court which refer to Naish House.



Peter Jones

So many people helped with the organisation and tasks, working hard to ensure the afternoon was a success. Anne and Peter and the Trust are most grateful to them all for helping to make the afternoon run smoothly and to raise over £1,500. This sum ensures the continuation of the Trust's charitable work: making contributions to the conservation of historic landscapes and their buildings as well as helping primary schools with their gardening projects and community groups who struggle to raise the funds for essential garden equipment.

*Wendy Pollard*





*The view across the lake to the Castle*

## Newton Park Avon Gardens Trust AGM

**Saturday 8 August**

*An opportunity to explore a Grade II\* Capability Brown landscape.*

Newton Park lies in an ancient landscape. Part of the Wansdyke, a great linear earthwork crossing North Somerset and Wiltshire, runs just south of the campus and was the 9th century boundary between the Saxon kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia.

In 1093, the Manor of Newton passed to the St Loe family from Saint-Lo in Normandy. Their descendant, Lord Botreaux, rebuilt the fortified manor house around 1400. The north east corner tower and gatehouse remain today.

A wealthy merchant from Bristol called Joseph Langton bought Newton St Loe in 1666. He altered the Tudor manor house, rebuilt the village and laid out a deer park planted with great avenues of elm trees.

A century later, in 1761, it was Langton's grandson who turned Newton Park into

a great work of landscape art. He employed the architect Stiff Leadbetter (1705-66) to design a new mansion, and then commissioned 'Capability' Brown (1716-83) to radically re-design the park. Brown laid out a picturesque entrance drive, two great lakes, an orangery looking like a temple, and an ornamental circuit walk with designed views taking in parts of the medieval castle. The surviving 15th century stable block was enlarged, in the style of the late 17th century, at about the time of Brown's involvement.





Ros Delany

Our guided tour started just outside of the rear of the 'Commons' building which had opened 18 months earlier and stood in stark modern contrast to the Grade I listed Georgian Mansion to our left. The mansion occupies a position in the centre of the park, overlooking the Upper Lake to the west and the Lower Lake to the north and with views to the south-east of parkland rising to a tree-lined ridge about 500m away.

The pleasure grounds of about 2.5ha are located principally around the Upper Lake. This is the second of three lakes separated by dams, weirs and cascades made by Brown in 1761. The small former top lake is now completely silted and has partially reverted to scrub. The Upper Lake, restored in 2000, is 250m long and 75m wide and is partly visible from the principal rooms of the north-west, garden front of the house.

We took the descending gravel circuit walk, ornamented with specimen trees and shrubs, providing a variety of views across the water to features of interest: the restored Garden Temple, backed by clipped yews, on the west bank; the boathouse on the east

*The descent to the lake*



Ann Hills



Ann Hills

bank and the Castle Keep on its mound to the south. An 18th century urn on a pedestal is placed on the west bank.

The Lake circuit walk passes through the ornamental woodland of Park Wood to the south and west. The eastern arm of the circuit connects with the ruins of St Loe's Castle. Ascending from the lake gravel path, we reached the 14th century Keep and Gateway of St Loe's Castle



Ann Hills

Through the gatehouse, we entered a walled courtyard garden with a simple formal layout around rectangular lawns, two circular ponds and an open summerhouse built into the north-west wall.



Between the east bank of the Upper Lake and the house is a steeply sloping grass bank with scattered mature oak trees dating from the Brown period. Research in 1993 indicated that Brown retained much of the pre-existing landscape in his reworking. As well as keeping most of the radiating avenues, he preserved the Castle gatehouse and Keep as eye catchers, whilst demolishing the rest of the Castle's outbuildings and walls.

Although William Gore-Langton consulted Humphry Repton (1752-1818) in 1797, and later owners laid out The Italian Garden and built glasshouses to grow exotic fruit and flowers, there were few further changes.

The late 18th century kitchen garden lies about 500m south of the house and at one time included garden walls, glasshouses, and bothies, as well as beds and a few trained fruit trees. Late 20th century features include a central garden with circular pool.

The former external glasshouses have been lost. All that remains of the window ventilating system used high up in the glasshouse back walls are the red brick

Ann Hills



*The kitchen garden with the faithfully rebuilt 19th century lean-to glasshouse*

arches, now filled in. Possibly because of its distance from the mansion, this area has fared less well than the pleasure grounds as far as conservation is concerned.

During the planning application procedure, this almost became a carpark. The Student Union building is just outside of the walls. Inside the walls, are permanently fixed, all weather table tennis units, giant games boards set in concrete and all manner of outdoor student entertainment facilities. However, there is one very long 19th century 'lean-to' glasshouse meticulously replicating the original, almost the whole length of the

Ros Delany





Wendy Pollard

far north east wall inside the walled garden. Despite a proliferation of buildings erected for educational use in the central area, the park still retains its pastoral appearance.

The Duchy of Cornwall purchased Newton Park during the Second World War. The Italian Garden had its flower beds transformed into onion beds. The core of the estate was leased out as a higher education college which expanded into the historic estate buildings and newly built accommodation and teaching blocks.

Although entirely a hand-made designed landscape, Newton Park has become home to some rare animal species, including great crested newts, otters, water voles, and nine species of bat.

The park, pleasure grounds, lakes and woodlands have been undergoing continuous restoration since 1994 by the Duchy of Cornwall and Bath Spa University College with funding from the Countryside Commission, Countryside Stewardship, Forestry Commission and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Anne Hills



Ros Delany

## Chairman's Speech to the AGM

“ Before we focus on our Trust, it is appropriate that we start with the broader picture and mention the recent agreement between the **Garden History Society** and the national **Association of Gardens Trusts** to merge and become a single organisation known as **The Gardens Trust (TGT)**. Throughout last year, the committee kept members informed of the negotiations and at our committee meeting in July we unanimously agreed to vote in favour of the merger. On 24 July voting on this important matter took place at the joint conference in Newcastle and most of the county gardens trusts were in favour of the merger. For us here in Avon, we are now affiliated to the TGT and it will be business as usual.

For the past year, we have continued to set our financial house in order by encouraging members to receive the *Bulletin* by email, by having advertising in our publications, by reconsidering some of our events and by holding open garden days. This year Anne and Peter Hills opened up their wonderful garden at Little Naish resulting in a profit of just under £1,500 for the Trust which we shall spend on educational, community and conservation grants. Thank you to Anne and Peter for what was a most enjoyable day which raised the profile of the Trust.

**At the AGM three years ago, one of the motions passed was that the committee would review annual membership fees every three years. This we duly did at the end of the last financial year and it was agreed that we keep membership fees as they are until the next review in 2018.**

Last year we set up a planning sub-committee which has been a great success as it has helped to spread the load of responding to planning applications and also enabled the five members to bounce ideas off each other.

*In the last year, we made donations of £50 to ten primary schools – six in Bristol and four in Bath – to help towards the purchase of plants or equipment. This means that in the last four years we have made grants to 48 primary schools across Avon. We also donated the sum of £500 to the Community Space Challenge based in Knowle, Bristol. The money went towards the building and filling of five raised beds at the Springfield Allotments. The organiser, Ben Carpenter, works with south Bristol primary schools and runs a programme where children learn forest skills, planting vegetables and the importance of recycling.*

*On the conservation grant front, we are liaising with the Woodland Trust and other interested individuals with a view to some restoration work at Bishops Knoll. We have highlighted this most interesting landscape in articles in our Bulletin and Journal. At the start of the calendar year, our donation to the Kings Weston Action Group was realised when an interpretation board was erected at Kings Weston.*

*I am delighted to say that the Trust has made grants to two very worthwhile community causes. Our grant of £200 to The Dry Arch Growers in Bathampton enabled them to purchase stakes and guards to protect apple trees while the Tortworth Forest Centre received £250 for equipment that was essential to help the volunteers there to cut back the near impenetrable undergrowth.*

*It remains for me to thank the committee members and volunteer helpers for their hard work in the past year. They all put in so much time to help make the Trust run smoothly and it is greatly appreciated.*

**Ros Delany**



Ros Delany

## **Bishop's Knoll, Sneyd Park**

### **Saturday 22 August**

Having been warned of the more challenging terrain than has been encountered on our more recent visits, 26 adventurous Trust members and their guests assembled on the afternoon of Saturday 22 August sporting a variety of footwear and outdoor clothing. Wendy Tippet and Bev Knott led a group apiece into the wooded area - one designated walk being longer and steeper in places than the alternative route.

*Hidden secrets of the site*



Ros Delany



Bishop's Knoll had been one of a group of large impressive Bristol houses and gardens, built in prominent locations on the steeply sloping sides of the Avon Gorge, overlooking the river. Built in the 1870s, the house and gardens were laid out to take full advantage of the spectacular views in all directions. The grounds covered an area of 4.84 hectares (12 acres) and included formal terraced lawns, an arboretum, working terraced kitchen gardens, woodland and paddocks.

The landscaped grounds were laid out over previous wood pasture that was part of the enclosure of the medieval deer park that had been granted to Rafe Sadler in 1547 after the Reformation. When plots from Sneyd Park were sold off for development, the Bishop's Knoll grounds were divided further with wrought iron estate fencing into a series of paddocks, supplementing the retained trees with new native and non-native trees. A collection of non-native conifers were laid out in a fashionable arboretum walk along the south-west boundary, where it was visible and added prestige to the grounds.



Ros Delany

*View towards garden building*



Ros Delany

*One exit route from the site*



Ros Delany

Also an ancient oak tree, one of Bristol's fine collections of veteran and ancient trees will have connections with neighbouring ancient oaks in nearby woodlands and Sneyd Park nature reserve as remnants of the deer park.

Although the house and associated formal gardens were demolished in the 1970s to make way for flats, and the wood pastures have been planted up as native woodland - many other features are still visible. These include remains of the late 19th century terraced kitchen gardens, with associated stone walls, steps, arbour and garden building, located down the steep south facing slope below the site of the old house. The surviving trees in the arboretum walk include some good specimens, which combined with the remaining mature trees within tree ring fencing in the former paddocks make a significant collection.

The walk through the site certainly fired the imagination of all present as a former grander way of life and a lost landscape was revealed.

*Wendy Tippett*



*Ros Delany*



*Steffie Shields*

## Kings Weston Research and Recording Study Day

**Tuesday 22 September**

Despite pouring rain and motorway chaos, members converged on Kings Weston from all over the country for a most informative and entertaining Study Day. An assessment of Lancelot Brown's possible involvement with the estate was the principal theme, with a glimpse of Thomas Wright's potential input as a tantalising extra. However, attendees (over 50) had the additional bonus of learning more about the work of KWAG (Kings Weston Action Group) and the continued restoration of the Grade 1 listed house.

To start the day's proceedings, David Martyn, conservation architect and co-founder of KWAG, gave a brief overview of this voluntary support group whose reputation has spread far beyond regional boundaries, recently reaching the final four in its bid for a Heritage Angel Award. Such national recognition for all their hard work is well-deserved and should generate even wider interest in their cause. Then it was over to Norman Routledge, current 'owner' of Kings



Wendy Smale

Weston House, who gave us an all too brief tour of the building, now looking resplendent after so many years of neglect.

And so, on to the main business of the day. David delved into his encyclopaedic knowledge of Kings Weston to summarise its period of ownership by the distinguished Southwell family (1679-1823). He highlighted probable reasons for Sir Robert's initial choice of the house, such as its strategic position between their Irish estates and London, accessibility to the port of Bristol via the Rivers Avon and Severn and its magnificent views over the latter towards Wales. He illustrated and discussed Sir John Vanbrugh's grandiose designs for the re-building scheme under Edward Southwell early in the 18th century, and described the 'de-formalisation' of the gardens and grounds by Edward Southwell III in the mid 18th century.

With the scene set, Steffie Shields, Vice-President of the newly formed Gardens Trust, and an authority on Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, then took up the story. She suggested that it might be difficult to date Brown's work at Kings Weston precisely, partly because he often sent out bills long after visits or work undertaken. What could lead to interesting comparisons or discoveries would be to look at other sites where his presence was well documented to see the scope of his work, ranging from earth-moving to dam building, to tree, and even daffodil, planting. His prowess as a water engineer may not have been needed at Kings Weston, with the Rivers Avon and Severn as natural aquatic features, but she

questioned how water was brought to the house itself: were there cisterns, pumps, engine houses, as at Grimsthorpe? She compared the stable blocks at Croome and Fisherwick with that at Kings Weston, all of similar styles, as happened in that period of cross-fertilised influence between consultants such as Robert Mylne, Thomas Stukeley and Brown. She mentioned Brown's pragmatic approach to his commissions, providing, for example, a flower garden or menagerie when requested; and described how he would consider the overall needs of an estate when surveying a site, not just one particular feature, so his influence or involvement at Kings Weston could be more widespread than first thought. The mystery of his links to this site could draw in as many visitors as factual documentation and Steffie suggested that David and Norman take full advantage of the publicity surrounding the forthcoming Tercentenary celebrations of this internationally renowned celebrity.

Our final speaker was Judy Preston, researcher into another, lesser known polymath, Thomas Wright. A contemporary of Brown, and from a similar family background, there was no known contact between them. Wright had a more chequered career path, working as astronomer, mathematician, architect and garden designer. He did not possess the entrepreneurial business skills of Brown, and though socialising with the well-connected, his work was not on such a grand scale. He was known to contribute more to existing



Wendy Smale





landscapes, favouring serpentine woodland walks with clearings known as saloons, evergreen and 'exotic' planting and garden buildings of a more rococo style. Closely involved with nearby Stoke Park and its owner Norborne Berkeley, also with Cleve Hill and Badminton, Wright wrote a letter from Kings Weston to Badminton in 1776, referring to a large glasshouse and kitchen garden and 'possible improvements' that could be achieved. Were these woodland walks and clearings or could they relate to the development of the Quarry Garden? The Southwell family subscribed to a couple of Wright's books so his work was clearly known to them. As with Brown, his presence there is proven, but the extent of his involvement can as yet only be surmised.

The afternoon offered the possibility of a longer or shorter walk around the grounds, taking in some of the significant historical features. Aply led by David Martyn and Richard Goldthorpe (Landscape Architect with Bristol City Council) we too had the opportunity to walk the landscape, spotting what might have been. One of the most exciting features was to view the house with its grand colonnaded chimneys through recently cleared openings in the trees and shrubs lining the ridge (south) walk from the Echo to the original entrance avenue. The intended connectivity between house and surrounding landscape became more apparent, vistas accessible once more.

It remains to be seen what further evidence comes to light concerning the activities of these two significant designers at Kings Weston through both ground-clearing and archival exploration. One great advantage of such study days is to generate interest and ideas, contacts and exchange of information. Judging from the number of email addresses being swapped and suggestions offered, its impact will survive well beyond the day itself.

*Wendy Smale*





# The Pavilions

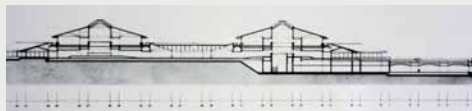
Ros Delany

In our spring *Bulletin* earlier this year, we reported that the former Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) building (now known as The Pavilions) at Bedminster Down had been awarded a Grade II listing by Historic England as one of the most important office buildings of its era. It is the first post-war designed landscape in Avon to be added to the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

At a ceremony in September, a plaque commemorating the building's listing was unveiled by the Mayor of Bristol, George Ferguson. This landmark building was

built between 1975 and 1978 to a design by architects Arup Associates. Today the building is occupied by a number of organisations including investor services group Computershare who hosted the event.

The brief for this new building was arguably ahead of its time as it established three main principles for the design. Firstly, the building's visual impact on the surrounding landscape should be minimal, secondly the building should humanise the working environment and lastly, the building should be energy efficient.



The end result is a large, low profile building with overhanging eaves, in a style reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's work. Consisting of seven interlocking pavilions, each with a central courtyard, high quality materials were used throughout: hardwood iroko for the window frames; Spanish slate for the roofs and concrete blocks containing pulverised fuel ash from the CEGB's own power stations.

The relationship between the building and its surrounding landscape is still evident. The site is located on a high ridge overlooking Bristol and when first built it could 'see' and be seen from four prominent locations - Clifton, Brunel's Suspension Bridge, Ashton Court and the village of Long Ashton. Subsequent tree growth has now obscured the view of the Suspension Bridge.

The landscape work included the creation of an 'invisible' car park that was accomplished by the building of a continuous double wall, set away from the perimeter glazing of the new building. This double wall provides a focus to the building as well as creating a visual 'dead ground' concealing the car park from within the building. The introduction of a continuous planting scheme within this double wall helps soften the connection



Ros Delany

between the building and its landscape and continues to be evident today. Externally, the planting scheme includes evergreens shrubs such as pittosporum, euonymus, box and small conifers all of which are softened in places by a summer planting of red pelargoniums (geraniums).

Inside, planted courtyards and built-in plant boxes continue to be an integral part of the design and help to further strengthen the link with the surrounding landscape. There are 'internal hedges' with single species planting, and planted features around the main circulation and reception area.

The rear of the building with its extensive views towards Long Ashton is dominated by a large hedge- enclosed field, part of which now contains an allotment area for use by employees. The now disused indoor swimming pool and dining room are at basement level at this end of the building. Both facilities open onto a sheltered terrace and exterior steps lead up to a terrace at ground floor office level. This area is surrounded by raised concrete beds planted



Ros Delany

with low growing evergreen shrubs. Steps from this terrace lead onto a lawn which is in fact the ceiling of the swimming pool below.

Following the unveiling ceremony, guests were given a tour of the building which gave us privileged access to appreciate a design that was ahead of its time. It also gave us a glimpse of the working and social environment four decades ago. One feature that was very important to the CEGB was the social welfare for its employees and besides the pool there was also a skittle alley, large bar area and a now empty trophy cabinet.

*Ros Delany*

Ros Delany







Tortworth Forest Centre is a 20 acre woodland with a rich and fascinating history that has become overgrown over the last decade. It forms part of the arboretum of Tortworth Court and was a wonder of its day, considered in the 1890s to be one of the top arboreta in the country. Its collection of over 300 rare and champion trees hosts an amazing ecosystem of birds, bats, butterflies and other insects.

The new owner of the Forest Centre, Angus Hanton is keen to encourage groups to learn about and use woodlands. Last year, Angus asked me if I wanted to take on the significant task of restoring this part of the arboretum sustainably, with the aim of opening it up to community use; from there the Tortworth Forest Centre was born.

The Centre aims to restore this part of a unique arboretum and create a vibrant outdoor learning centre to nurture the next generation of wildlife enthusiasts and to encourage audiences to learn new skills and engage with conservation. I hope to make this area available to a variety of different groups who might not otherwise have access to such a space.

The project has been set up as a Community Interest Company as it meant I could seek philanthropic funding for community work and restoration of the woodlands, and the company was founded in April this year. Since then I have been meeting with various charities and community groups who are interested in using the space for their charitable work, as well as beginning the long journey of restoring the woodland.

I am extremely fortunate to have the support of the renowned dendrologist, Tony Titchen, who was commissioned to survey the trees of the entire arboretum back in 2002 by the then owners, HM Prison Leyhill. Within our area, Tony identified the 21 most interesting and significant trees which he codified into a detailed descriptive list, which, with the help of volunteers, I am photographing through the seasons for the website.



Tortworth Forest Centre

Tony is now working on a new survey of the oaks: his research from historical documents suggests that Tortworth Forest Centre and surrounding areas of the arboretum may contain up to 30 different species of oak, one of the most varied collections in the UK. To support this work I have organised volunteer working parties to clear pathways through the dense undergrowth to all the important trees to enable ongoing surveys and conservation work.

I am incredibly grateful to receive a donation from the Avon Gardens Trust which has enabled me to purchase good quality tools for our volunteer conservation days. Once a month up to twenty volunteers join me to begin the long process of restoration - to date we have made remarkable progress into the bramble and rhododendron but there is a great deal more to be done.

Volunteers range from local residents through people interested in conservation, to individuals referred from Addiction Rehabilitation Centres to improve their self-esteem and give them an opportunity to gain new skills.

I have secured additional funding for these conservation days from the Nineveh Charitable Trust, an environmental organisation based in Kent, which will pay for one year's worth of monthly conservation days at the arboretum.

Future plans include obtaining funding to run woodland management internships to be offered to long term unemployed adults or those recovering from addiction. We hope that this internship would result in a nationally recognised qualification and lead to further study or paid employment.

If you would like to volunteer your time or find out more please contact me.

*Rebecca Cork*

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## AGT Events for 2016

*Here are dates for next year's diary.*

*More details and booking forms will follow in future Bulletins and on our website.*

### *Visit to Tormarton Court*

**Thursday 19 May**



Google Earth

Eleven acres of formal and natural gardens in a stunning Cotswold setting set around a former rectory that was enlarged in 1812 for the Somerset family. The Head Gardener will lead the tour that includes the walled garden, kitchen garden and Mediterranean garden. In May the wisteria is a feature and the spring flowers and bulbs in the glade are set off by the fresh, green foliage of the trees.

### *The Genius of Sylvia Crowe*

*A tour of the designed landscape in Bristol*

**Saturday 11 June**

It maybe brutal, but it's beautiful!



Wendy Tippet

Implemented in the 1960s, the functional landscape scheme associated with the Cumberland Basin Bridges and Ashton Gate Junction is the only comprehensive road scheme attributed to the pioneering Landscape Architect Dame Sylvia Crowe.

Led by Wendy Tippet, the guided walk will start at 2pm outside the Rose of Denmark, Hotwells and finish at Lockside Café, on the other side of the Cumberland Basin, around 4pm. Be prepared for spiral staircases and lots of concrete.

## *Garden visit and AGM Lady Farm, Chelwood*

**Saturday 6 August, 2pm**



Wendy Pollard

In the nine years since AGT's last visit, the 12 acre garden has seen many changes. The AGM will be in the tea room overlooking the garden which we can explore on a tour afterwards. Created by Judy Pearce, Judy will talk about the changes she's made before we step out to the garden with its natural springs feeding lakes, wildflower meadow, shaded walks, 'prairie' and 'steppe' style planting in amongst formal borders and vistas in the rolling landscape.

## *Coach trip to Durslade Farm and Pen Mill Farm*

**Wednesday 7 September**

Durslade Farm is the home of the Hauser and Wirth Gallery where Piet Oudolf has created the landscaping for the entire site. An internationally-renowned Dutch landscape designer, Oudolf is a leading figure of the 'New Perennial' movement with his use of bold drifts of herbaceous perennials and arching grasses, chosen as much for their structure as for their signature colours of rusts and soft purples.



Pen Mill Farm

Our next visit is to Pen Mill Farm, a romantic garden with acid-loving mature trees and shrubs in a secluded valley. After lunch here, the owners will take us on a guided tour of their garden with its late summer herbaceous borders featuring over 50 different salvias.

## *Lunch and Lecture*

**Thursday 10 November**

A light buffet lunch at the Clifton Cathedral followed by a talk from Margie Hoffnung.



*Rosemary Verey's garden at Barnsley House*

*"Rosemary Verey came to gardening at the relatively late age of about 40 and within twenty years was one of the most celebrated garden designers of the late 20th century. My talk will examine how she managed this and who and what influenced the development of her particular strand of plant-driven garden making. I will look in some detail at how these factors manifested themselves in different aspects and themes within her design work, as well as looking at how the antiquarian horticultural books she owned and those she wrote contributed to her legacy."*