



Avon Gardens Trust

Summer Bulletin 2018

Chairman's Welcome

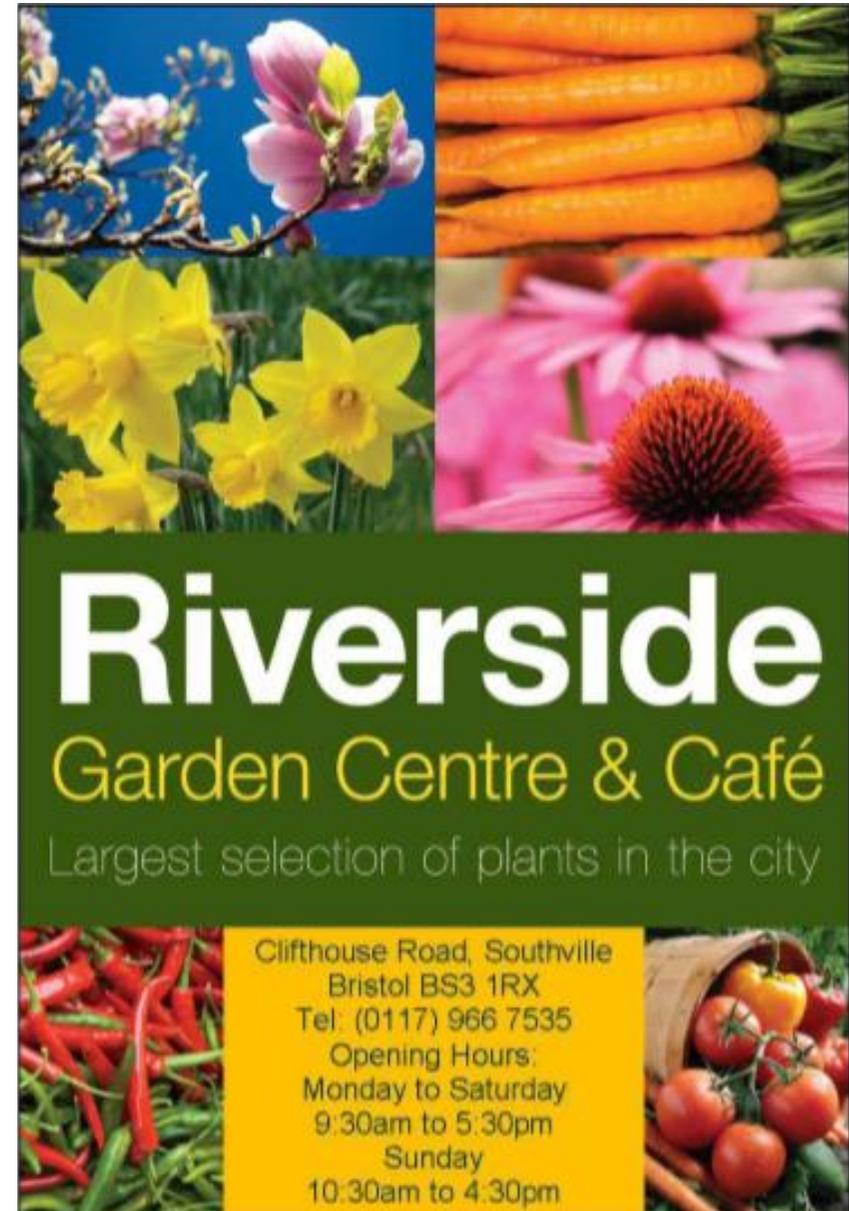
This Bulletin comes with news of several changes to Avon Gardens Trust. Stalwarts of our committee, Tony and Anne Merriman, have decided to call it a day after the Annual General Meeting and enjoy a well-earned retirement from Trust duties. Tony has been our Treasurer for over fifteen years and his experience and financial acumen will be sorely missed. Anne has been our Membership Secretary for five years, a role she has undertaken with grace and thoroughness. We wish them both well and hope we shall see them at future Trust events. Alan Kempton will be taking over the role of Treasurer.

Other changes have come about because the volunteer who has helped us for many years both as graphic designer for our publications and as our website designer has a serious illness. This has meant the Bulletin, together with the documents required for the Annual General Meeting on 6 October, had to be put together at short notice, a task some of the committee took on themselves.

The decision to send these papers for the AGM to all our members had already been made as it would give all members the opportunity to read the draft Minutes of last year's meeting and this year's Reports. We hope this will enable members who are unable to attend our events feel more involved and give an insight into what we have been up to during the past year.

In the past, our volunteer has willingly done this work for the Trust at little or no charge which has meant we have always been able to send out detailed and illustrated publications to our members.

Some difficult decisions will need to be made next year about the design and printing of Trust publications. Inevitably the costs associated with this aspect of the Trust's activities will increase and



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for this reason I would welcome any thoughts you, as a member, may have.

The website will now be moving to a different site with a new website builder, but we plan to retain most of the features of our current website. Please bear with us over the next few weeks while these necessary changes are being implemented. If you have any ideas for how we could improve our website, now is the perfect time to let me know using the email address below.

I hope to meet as many of you as possible either at our AGM and lecture or at the garden visit to South Kelding in late October.

Ros Delany

chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk

Gentle Reminder

Renewal date for membership is **1st July**.

Please send your cheque (£15 single, £20 joint) to the Membership Secretary at Danby, 22 The Causeway, Congresbury, Bristol BS49 5DJ.

Alternatively, please consider setting up a Banker's Order.

Please contact Anne Merriman if you have any queries, **Telephone 01934 833619**

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 6 October, 1.30pm

The Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral, Clifton Park, Bristol BS8 3BX

After the AGM a finger buffet with refreshments will be served.

And then we have an illustrated talk 'Plant Hunters and Pioneers' by Veitch historian, Caradoc Doy

Caradoc Doy will give us a brief history of a remarkable nursery which sent twenty-three plant collectors to many countries, mainly during the Victorian period. William and Thomas Lobb, Richard Pearce, John Gould Veitch and Peter Veitch, Frederick Burbidge, Charles Maries, Ernest Wilson and others all worked for the Veitch

Nurseries of Exeter and Chelsea. So successful were they that there is scarcely a garden in the British Isles that does not contain a plant derived from their introductions.

The talk highlights some of the well-known and interesting varieties introduced by these pioneering plant hunters who discovered hundreds of new species. Caradoc will also introduce us to one of the designers used by the Veitch Nursery, Frederick William Meyer, the pioneer of rockery design in the Victorian era. A Meyer rockery was recently discovered at Backwell, North Somerset.

A gardening storyteller, as well as discussing important personalities, plant collectors and beautiful plants, Caradoc's talks also gives an insight into the social history of the time. Appealing to the gardener and non-gardener alike, he travels widely throughout the British Isles giving talks and garden tours. Caradoc has been researching the history of the Veitch Nurseries of Exeter and Chelsea for many years and this illustrated talk centres on this remarkable family business and their plant hunters.

Although there is no charge for Avon Gardens Trust members for the refreshments and talk, there is a small charge of £5 for their guests.

Book by contacting Peter Hills - events@avongardenstrust.org.uk, or using the link www.avongardenstrust.org.uk/events.

Autumn Colours at South Kelding

Saturday 20 October, 2.00pm

South Kelding in Upton Cheyney is a young seven acre garden set on a hillside with stunning panoramic views from its upper levels. There are herbaceous and shrub beds, prairie-style scree beds, an orchard, native copses and a small arboretum grouped by continents. Beyond the arboretum lies a large wildlife pond and a boundary stream which runs through woodland featuring shade and moisture-loving plants.

On moving to Upton Cheyney in 2004, Barry and Wendy Smale became the proud owners of three fields and a house, which was soon to be demolished and replaced with a modern, more efficient and sustainable home. During the build some of the native tree copses were planted and the arboretum started. Flower beds were

added around the new house and a long curving shrub bed planted to screen the (then rather ugly) machinery shed and storage yard beyond. An orchard was planted next, one bitterly cold December day with snow lying on the ground!

In the lower field, trees were continually added to the arboretum which, despite the best efforts of grazing sheep and escapee cows, is now flourishing. The occasional 'must -have' addition still appears so that this area has something of interest throughout the year. Beyond the arboretum lies a large wildlife pond with the boundary stream running beside it and into the small woodland area, Throughout the wood is a selection of shade-tolerant shrubs such as hydrangeas, sarcococca, hollies, elders and sorbarias..

Autumn colour features in the red and yellow-stemmed dogwoods, spindle copses, acers, rowans and liquidambers, with the white, pink and coppery textured bark of different birch tree species providing an attractive contrast to the changing leaf colours. Up by the house the bergenias, echinaceas and sedums in the scree beds offset the waving flowerheads and stems of Miscanthus and Stipa grasses.

Cost, £8 for members, £10 for guests, to include refreshments. Book by contacting Peter Hills - events@avongardenstrust.org.uk, or using the link www.avongardenstrust.org.uk/events.

AGT Fund Raising Event - 2018

Avon Gardens Trust's main fund raising event this year was to open the Walled Garden at Little Naish, as happened last year, in collaboration with 'Portishead in Bloom'.

Little Naish was one of thirteen local gardens open for the weekend of June 2nd. and 3rd. 2018. The sum raised by all thirteen gardens was £8,000, which will help to finance Portishead taking part in the 'In Bloom' National Annual Competition.

The weekend event was also a fund raising financial success for the Avon Gardens Trust.

Members volunteered in force at Little Naish over the two days, with 22 volunteers efficiently running the 'tea tent', plant sales, parking, entrance and book sales. The atmosphere was 'good humoured' and

one of relief, as we had 24hours of dry weather and above average temperatures.

Preparation for the occasion, in drought conditions, drained the underground rainwater tank at Little Naish. The tank had been installed during the extensive development of the Naish Estate by the Ashton Court Estate and recorded in the yearly account books 1872-1920.

The whole weekend fundraising was a financial success for the AGT, having raised £1,223.47, almost double the amount raised in 2017. Thank you to every member who baked a cake or grew plants for sale.

The money will be used to fund Community, Conservation and Education grants in 2018/2019.

Thank you, particularly to all 22 members of AGT who volunteered to organise the event, help park the cars, serve tea and cake, sell so many plants, take memorable photographs and welcome the visitors at the gate.
Anne Hills

A Garden Full of Surprises

On a hot summer's day in late June, Trust members and their guests visited Stancombe Park. Nestling deep in the countryside around North Nibley, the house and grounds are in private ownership and rarely open to the public. We assembled in the courtyard where Peter, the Head Gardener who has worked there for nearly 60 years, gave us an introduction.

The largely formal gardens near the house, known as the Upper Garden, were designed and laid out in the late 20th century by Gerda Barlow, the mother of the current owner. She undertook most of the planting and maintenance herself during her lifetime with help from the Head Gardener. This part of the garden includes the 50m long Pattern Border where box hedges frame herbaceous perennials. Gerda always wanted this part of the garden to be enjoyed and there was no doubt that her objective had been achieved as we admired the magnificent mature trees, flowers and views out over a tranquil valley.

Then it was time to follow a narrow path and descend many steps down to the garden that had been built 150 years earlier by Purnell Bransby Purnell. His unusual name was because Stancombe had been part of the estate of his grandfather, William Purnell of Dursley, who died in 1805. As his daughter and would-be heiress Anne had died a year earlier, the estate passed to her son Purnell Bransby who adopted the surname Purnell by deed poll in 1805. In 1813 he married and started to rebuild Stancombe Park and it is probably soon after that he began to create this water garden which has been given grade 1 status by Historic England.

Members followed the twisting paths uncertain what was coming up; surprises included a brick tunnel guarded by a statue of Cerebus, a grotto, a Doric temple and two octagonal pavilions.

William Crouch painted a series of watercolours of these gardens, probably in the late 1830s. He died in 1840 and it is these paintings showing the Temple with its steps and fountain, the poolside pergola, the grotto and the two lodges at the south end of the water garden that help to pinpoint the date of these gardens as any possible records concerning their construction were destroyed in the 1840s when a fire burnt down the original mansion. The current house dates from c1880.

This was a visit full of unexpected treasures and all who came along were captivated by the atmosphere of the place. It is certainly a garden where there are many unanswered questions about its development. Perhaps one day answers will come to light.

What a Difference Three Years Makes

To celebrate Bristol's June 2018 Get Growing Trail, Hartcliffe Health and Environmental Group (HHEAG) had Open Days at both their Molesworth Drive and Bouchier Gardens sites. I had last visited the Bouchier Garden's site in August 2015 (see our website update) when it was in its very early stages. The fruit trees were newly planted and the Round House just at the planning stage. With the Round House now built, with maturing fruit trees and raised beds for herbs and planting, the site has really come into its own. They regularly harvest apples, pears, plums, quince and medlar. The latest planting is espalier apples along the fence.

Up above the housing there is a feeling of fresh air and fantastic views across Bristol. In spite of a gloomy day families came up the hill to find activities celebrating the Get Growing Trail which included potting up cuttings, craft tables, games and activities, a book stall, and an outdoor kitchen with a pizza oven attached. Popular tea and coffee with cakes and biscuits were being provided by the Avon Wildlife Trust within the Round House. Willow weaving has always been one of their crafts and now they have planted their own willow grove - there were chairs on display made from willow. To see this previously neglected woodland backed site humming with people enjoying themselves was a pleasure.

The use of the site is growing continually. There is a regular gardening group on Wednesday mornings and Avon Wildlife Trust hires the site on Fridays for Wellbeing Through Nature, a well structured course. The Round House and site are hired out for single or other community events, HHEAG keeping the cost nominal for very local community groups. Forest Schools are growing in popularity with a waiting list for the space with bug hunts, planting and lighting fires. Social workers bring groups of children with special needs, this initiative supported by Pukka Herbs. Youth Moves led by Ben Carpenter hire the site, there are father and son activities, men's groups, the list goes on.

HHEAG with Sue Walker and her team provide enthusiasm and leadership for all the activities and facilities at both their green sites and within their headquarters in Hareclive Road. The local community benefits from their work and the close links they have with Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership helps broaden the range and scope of their activities. *Wendy Pollard*

Lastly

Two Garden History courses looking at the influences that shaped our heritage gardens:

A one-day course on 15th November from 10am to 3pm at Traditional and Rural Skills Friary, Bath

A 6 week introduction to Garden History: 3rd November to 8th December. Saturday mornings from 10am-1pm at Bristol Botanic Gardens

For details contact Dr Audrey Gerber audrey.gerber@bath.edu