

April/May News from Avon Gardens Trust

Promoting and protecting your local historic landscapes



Welcome to our latest News

The past few weeks have been dry and sunny and has given us all the opportunity to get out into our parks and gardens to enjoy the trees and flowers. The gardens that we have organised visits to in late May and June will be a riot of colour by then, but our role is not all about organising visits and it is easy to forget the important role the Trust plays in awarding grants to primary schools.

Ros Delany, Editor

Thank you from Redfield School

In the last issue of the News, there was a short article about the grant of £200 that the Trust had awarded to Redfield School in central Bristol to help develop a garden at their school.

Here is an email received from James Burley, a teacher at the school



I've attached a picture I took during the holidays of some staff and parent volunteers clearing one of the planter areas. We have put topsoil in along nearly the entire stretch now and one of the parents set up a crowdfunder to get more money for plants for the borders which has received £140 so far.

Next week, each class is going to decorate a wooden sign for their planting area and the After School Club put in potatoes and onions last week. Our new head teacher, Sophie, who

started this term, has also got stuck in and started work on the area at the front of the school too!

I will update you with pictures and more later on in the term. Thanks again for the money you sent which was spent on trowels, spades, forks and enough gloves for whole classes to go outside and garden 😊 Some also went towards the huge topsoil delivery we had too!

Dates for your Diary

Avon Gardens Trust Garden Visits

A programme of events has been arranged of visits to interesting gardens during the summer and we hope you will be able to join us. Booking for any AGT garden visits may be made by visiting <https://www.avongardenstrust.org.uk/>-

Bowood Manor House Gardens, near Chippenham

Wednesday 25 May at 11am



We will be taken on a guided tour of the grounds and private walled garden followed by lunch in the Stables. The gardens have been extensively renovated in recent years so this will be an opportunity to see the result of this work. There

will also be a visit to see the '**Capability**' **Brown** landscape that exists.

Following lunch, an optional visit can be made to the adjacent Bowood Manor Woodland Garden. The Woodland Garden entrance is some two miles away and will be in full colour and glory at this time of year featuring rhododendrons and azaleas. The additional cost of this part of the visit is £6 per person payable on the day. Unfortunately, it is not possible to arrange this part of the visit as a group, but if you feel you would like to visit, please let us know to help Bowood.

Cost will be £26 per person to include a guided tour of the grounds, private walled garden and lunch.

Great Chalfield Manor House and Garden, near Melksham

Friday 10 June at 2pm



Great Chalfield Manor was built around 1465 by Thomas Tropenell, a wealthy business man. Over the ensuing centuries the house had many owners and at one point was used as a farm house.

In 1905, Major Robert Fuller saved the house as he restored and refurnished it to its former glory. Little changed from its medieval origins, the house has featured in many recent films and TV series.

The garden comprises vistas, lawns, yew topiary, a spring-fed pond as well as an orchard where the grass is kept long. The picturesque effect is further enhanced by waterfalls of pink roses that climb the walls of the medieval manor. The roses should be in their glory when we visit.

We will be served tea and home-made cake in the Great Hall by the owner Patsy Floyd during our visit.

Cost will be £7 per person for NT members, £17 per person for non-NT members to include a tour of the house and refreshments.

Peter Hills, Events

Grant for Filton Avenue School

The past two years have made us all realise how important outdoor spaces and gardens are to us for our mental wellbeing. So, when the Small Grants Committee of the Trust received an application from the Special Educational Needs Coordinator at Filton Avenue Primary School asking for financial help to create both a sensory garden and a herb garden for their sensory and autistic pupils, the Trust wanted to help.

There is already a small school garden that usually involves the fifty 'nurture and thrive' intervention pupils. These have been recognised as disadvantaged with many of them having experienced early trauma resulting in emotional and social needs. The school now would like to create a sensory garden and the pupils have got involved with this project.



The two pictures show what the area currently looks like and what the children want! They intend to paint the tyres themselves and have even suggested bringing articles from home to use on the sensory wall. The 'nurture and thrive' pupils have also got involved as they want to plant herbs such as mint and lavender.

Planning these gardens has become a project for many at the school and there is going to be a competition for the children to name their new garden. The Trust has asked that the award of £250 goes towards some much-needed gardening equipment and an outdoor container to hold the seed trays. When the garden is completed, there are plans to offer parent support classes in which parents are invited in to work and play with their children.

The Common Beech

They determined on walking round Beechen Cliff, that noble hill whose beautiful verdure and hanging coppice render it so striking an object from almost every opening in Bath. (Northanger Abbey, Jane Austen, 1817)

In Celtic folklore, Fagus was the god of beech trees leading to the botanical name for the common beech of *Fagus sylvatica*. The beech surely deserves its title as queen of British trees as mature trees can grow to a height of more than 40m and a walk under their huge domed crowns can feel akin to being in an outdoor cathedral.

The young leaves in spring are lime green becoming darker as the year progresses. The tree is monoecious, meaning both male and female flowers grow on the same tree.



In April and May, the tassel-like male catkins hang from long stalks at the end of twigs, while female flowers grow in pairs, surrounded by a cup that when pollinated by the wind encloses one or two beech nuts (known as beechmast). Only specialist shade-tolerant plants such as box, coralroot bittercress and a variety of orchids can survive beneath a beech canopy.

The natural habitat of the beech extends over a large part of Europe but in the UK the tree is only considered truly native to south-east England and south-east Wales, becoming established approximately 13,500 years ago. It grows in woods or as single trees, usually on drier, free-draining soils.

Beech timber has many uses and, in the past, has been used in the making of furniture, cooking utensils, tool handles and sports equipment. The late C17 poet, Abraham Cowley, confirms this in the lines:

*Hence in the world's best years, the humble shed
Was happily and fully furnished;
Beech made their chests, their beds, and their join'd-stools;
Beech made the board, the platters and the bowls.*

The wood burns well and was traditionally used to smoke herring. The edible nuts, or masts, were once fed to pigs, and in France the nuts are still sometimes roasted and used as a coffee substitute. The tree was thought to have medicinal properties and its leaves were boiled to make a poultice which was used to relieve swellings. Forked beech twigs are also traditionally used for divining.

In 1825, Elizabeth Kent, described how the leaves were used instead of straw for mattresses and how the nuts when fresh could occasion '*giddiness and headache; but when dried and powdered, to make wholesome bread. Roasted, they have been substituted for coffee*'.



Beechen Cliff, the woodland overlooking Bath, takes its name from the beeches there. This woodland provides a walking route to the viewpoint at Alexandra Park, a view so good that Jane Austen wrote about it in *Northanger Abbey*.

The *Fagus sylvatica* 'Aspenifolia', also known as the fern-leaf or cut-leaf beech, is a majestic cultivar of the common beech. It was introduced to the UK in the early 1800s and has become established as a favourite specimen tree due to its dark green, long deeply serrated leaves which make an interesting feature.

There is a mature fern-leaf beech at Doynton House, South Gloucestershire (BS30 5SR). The house has a late-C17 garden with a series of walled gardens, and a mid-C19 arboretum containing a fern-leaf beech. The garden at Doynton House is open under the National Gardens Scheme over the weekend of Saturday 2 June and Sunday 3 June, 12 noon to 5pm.

ELLACOMBE 200

A Celebration of the life of Rev. Canon Henry Nicholson Ellacombe

Exhibition from Sunday 22 May – early September

St Mary's Church, Bitton, South Gloucestershire

My ideal of a good mixed garden is one in which the borders are always full, in which there is no repetition,..... and which in every month of the year and in every week can show a different set of plants in flower (Henry Ellacombe)

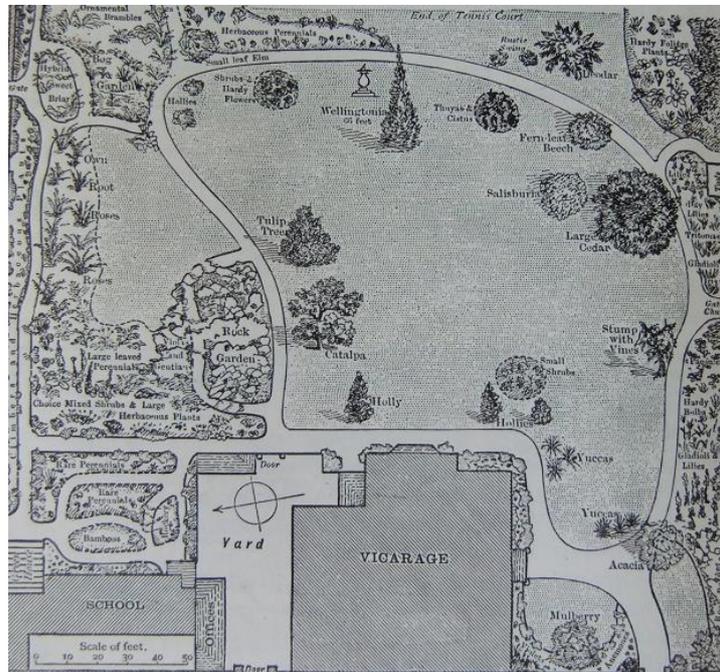


The death of a vicar in a largely rural parish does not usually warrant great attention, but when Henry Nicholson Ellacombe died in 1916, at the age of 94, it was a matter of national interest. Ellacombe was born in 1822 in the vicarage at Bitton where his father was curate and when his father moved from the parish in 1850, Ellacombe was appointed vicar in his place.

Ellacombe was well-known as a gardener, botanist and traveller. He was perhaps the most celebrated of the clergyman gardeners in the late C19, and was the one who was the most published and so, not surprisingly, in 1897 he became one of the first recipients of the RHS Victoria medal.

In 1881, the renowned director of Kew, Sir Joseph Hooker dedicated a volume of the *Botanical Magazine* to Ellacombe. Following Ellacombe's death, a later director at Kew, Arthur Hill, edited a memorial volume of the renowned plantsman. During his

lifetime, Ellacombe's garden in Bitton, became a place of pilgrimage for anyone interested in horticulture, though less for its landscaped beauty as for the variety of plants that were grown and his botanical knowledge. Over a five-year period in the 1870s he received around 4,900 plants and 1,000 packets of seeds from both friends and botanical gardens including Kew and New York. The garden also provided the source material for his extensive writing and journalism.



Bitton: plan of part of the garden for flowers and shrubs. William Robinson, 1890, *The English Flower Garden*

Ellacombe left a collection of notes, books, photographs and papers spread across a number of archives, most notably at Kew and the Bristol Records Office. Copies of these documents are being brought together in this Exhibition to provide a commemoration of Canon Ellacombe's life and times.

The venue for this Exhibition is in the village church of St Mary's Church in Bitton and the church is hoping to raise funds to maintain this heritage asset and to develop its role further as a centre for the whole community. The present church dates largely from the Norman period, but significant parts have survived from an earlier Anglo Saxon Church.

Clifton & Hotwells Open Gardens
Saturday 11 June and Sunday 12 June
10.30am - 5pm

This is an opportunity to visit the communal gardens and squares hidden behind the elegant terraces of Clifton and Hotwells. This year there are two new gardens, Clifton Hill House and Clifton Meadow. There will be a variety of refreshments and activities, including talks, conducted walks and a tree trail as well as two choirs, the *Gert Lush Choir* and the *Tobacco Factory Singers*.

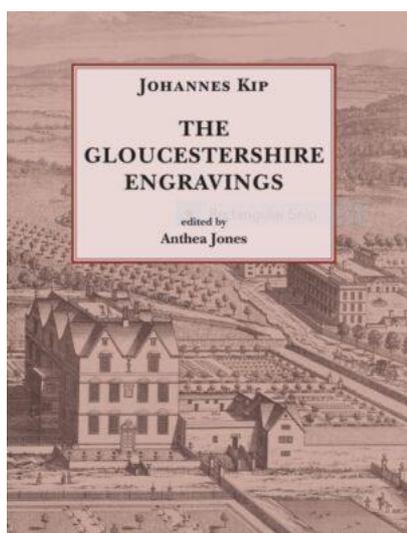
More detailed information about opening times, cost and individual gardens is available on <https://www.gssq-bristol.com/>

Book Review

Johannes Kip; The Gloucestershire Engravings

edited by Anthea Jones

In our Spring 2021 Newsletter, this book was briefly introduced, and it is worthy of a fuller description here. Dr Anthea Jones is a notable historian and stalwart of our neighbouring county gardens trust of Gloucestershire. Her in-depth knowledge of the county is vast, and this book is a treasure trove of facts and illustrations that emanate from the famous collection of Dutch engraver Johannes Kip (c1653 – 1721). Published to coincide with the tercentenary of Kip's death in 1721, this book is a marvellous addition to our libraries.



Based on the Kip engravings in Sir Roberts Atkyns' *The Ancient and Present state of Glostershire*, 1712, Jones brings the subject up to date with her careful investigation into the detail of the original art works, that are reproduced and then dissected with precision and historic research. She then brings us up to date with evidence of features that remain to this day.

Avon Gardens Trust includes South Gloucestershire, Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset, ie the county of Avon that actually only existed between 1974 and 1996. Go back in time to the C18 when Johannes Kip was here, the county of 'Glostershire' included much of the present-day unitary authorities of South Glos. and Bristol. Kip produced a great number of his famous engravings within Glostershire, and a total 16 of the 63 engravings included in the 1712 map are within our current AGT patch, that's a massive 25%! Lucky us.

The following list of AGT engravings are repeated in the order of appearance in the book, ie alphabetically by today's parish names:

SOUTH GLOS.

- **Abson & Wyck:** *Wyck the Seat of Richard Haines Esq.* Wick, BS30 5RB
- **Almondsbury:** *Knole the Seat of Thos: Chester Esq.* Almondsbury, BS32 4BS
- **Almondsbury:** *Over the Seat of John Dowell Esq.* Almondsbury, BS32 4DG
- **Alveston:** *the Seat of Edward Hill Esq.* Rudgway, BS35 3SQ
- **Badminton:** *the Seat of the Duke of Beaufort.* Badminton is featured in the introduction rather than the main body of the book, as it is a later engraving by Joseph Smith (*Britannia Illustrata*, 1715)
- **Dyrham:** *the Seat of Willam Blathwait Esq.* Bath SN14 8HR. Now the famous Dyrham Park owned by the National Trust
- **Hill:** *the Seat of Edward Fust Bart.* Berkeley GL13 9EB

- **Mangotsfield: Cleeve Hill** the Seat of William Player Esq. Cleeve Court BS16 6DL. This estate formed part of the Kingswood Chase
- **Siston: Syston** the Seat of Samll Trotman Esq. Mangotsfield BS16 9LU
- **Tortworth:** the Seat of Matthew Ducey Morton. Wotton-under-Edge GL12 8HF

BRISTOL

- **Henbury:** the Seat of Simon Harcourt Esq. Henbury BS10 7QS. This is the present Blaise Castle Estate site
- **Henbury:** the Seat of Mr John Sampson. Rectory Gardens BS10 7AH
- **Henbury: Kingsweston** the Seat of Edward Southwell Esq. Henbury BS11 0UR. The estate of Kingsweston is owned by Bristol City Council
- **Stoke-Giffard: Stoke Gifford** the Seat of John Berkeley Esq. Stapleton BS16 1ZS. This majority of the parkland falls within the Bristol boundary these days and is divided by the M32. The Dower House is in South Glos.
- **Westbury [-on-Trym]: Stoke Bishop** the Seat of Sr Thomas Cann. Stoke Hill BS9 1JP
- **Westbury [-on-Trym]: Sneed Park** the Seat of Joseph Jackson Esq. Glenavon Park BS9 1RJ

To quote Nicholas Kingsley in his Foreword:

*for the first time, I think, she (Anthea Jones) gives proper attention to those places where the views overlap, especially at **Henbury**, Cirencester and Dowdeswell, where one house can be seen in the background of another. Her analysis makes clear just how much information the individual prints can yield, and I hope it will act as both a guide and a stimulus to future research in this unique resource.*

I highlight Henbury in Kingsley's quote as it falls in our Bristol patch. Jones states *Kip made engravings of three houses in Henbury parish, one at Kingsweston, two simply as 'Henbury'.....the two Henbury village houses appear twice, small in one engraving, large in the other as appropriate. The houses were neighbours.....* The grounds of one evolved to become Blaise Castle Estate, with a replacement house. The neighbouring property of Henbury Manor remains.

Each of the engravings is worth poring over. What a fascinating book Anthea Jones has put together; so thoroughly researched and bringing the local famous Kip engravings right up to date. I recommend adding this book to your collection.

Wendy Tippett

The book is published by Hobnob Press www.hobnobpress.co.uk in association with Gloucestershire Gardens and Landscape Trust www.gglt.org. It retails for £20 with a paperback version now available for £16.95.

Photograph from the Archive

Dyrham Park, May 2015



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Wendy Pollard who does such an excellent job with the layout of the News was not available to help with this edition.

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