



## November/December News from Avon Gardens Trust

*Promoting and protecting  
your local historic  
landscapes*

As we enter the festive period, the words *peace on earth, good will toward men* seem a near impossible aspiration; news from Ukraine, national strikes and the rising cost of living all bearing this out. As a respite from this, I hope you enjoy this edition of the News with its usual mix of articles and photographs.

Thank you for your continuing support of the Trust and a Merry Christmas to you all.

Ros Delany  
Editor

### *A Date for your Diary*

## *Scanning the Political Divide – Neo-Palladianism and the C18 Landscape* *by Dr Carole Fry*

Neo-Palladianism was a 'taste' revolution which transformed much of the built environment as well as every aspect of art and taste in the C18. However, there are many myths about neo-Palladianism; perhaps the biggest being that it was the preserve of a single political party, the Whigs.

This talk examines these myths and explores more likely theories about the style and its effect on C18 landscapes. The use of the landscape as a political canvas will also be explored.

*Carole Fry specialises in architectural history and conservation and works alongside a wide range of historic environment stakeholders. She is a founding Director of AHC Consultants ([ahcconsultants.co.uk](http://ahcconsultants.co.uk)).*

**The talk is on Saturday 14 January starting at 2.30pm at Bath Royal Scientific and Literary Institution in Queen Square, Bath. Tickets are £10 each to include refreshments.**

[click here for a link to Eventbrite to book](#)

For further information contact Peter Hills 07748507166 or mail - [events@avongardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:events@avongardenstrust.org.uk)



## *Update on Hanham Abbots School*

In last year's November/December News, we described how a newly created gardening club at Hanham Abbots school was planning to transform a rarely used courtyard area into an area where outdoor learning could take place. The transformation proved a huge success especially as many children at the school live in flats and so they love being outside getting hands-on with planting.

Recently, the Trust made a further grant of £100 to the school to enable them to complete their project. The teacher involved with the project kindly send through some photographs recently showing how the courtyard was looking with the plants bought through the grant from the Trust.

The pictures showed how the once neglected courtyard has been transformed to an important and well used area for the school's outdoor activities thanks to the grant made by the Trust.




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## *Grant for Blaise High School*

Blaise High School was recently awarded a grant of £250 by Avon Gardens Trust to help them develop an outdoor garden space. This funding would contribute towards a build project that would help some of their more vulnerable students engage with the school and give them a deeper sense of purpose and belonging within the community. The school is hoping to create an area that will enrich the pupils in their therapy department by providing somewhere where they can get their hands dirty and experience the mental health benefits of gardening. The therapy department works with over two hundred pupils each week.

The school informed us that four different clubs or groups of specific children will benefit from the grant. Firstly, those students with specific learning difficulties and Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) will be able to use the space on a weekly basis for outdoor education and self-esteem building activities, whilst the Thrive provision (therapy based pastoral workers) will use the space on a daily basis. A weekly lunchtime club for around fifteen Year 10 pupils is run for those interested in working in the horticultural industry. This particular course is run jointly with a landscape designer in conjunction with Bristol Botanic Gardens. Finally, in an effort to reduce violence and crime in the community, the school works with a group of 20 young people in Project Ambition which aims to harness their energy and talents in a more engaging and productive way by having them involved in the group build of this outdoor space.

Currently the school is in the initial building phase and will use the award to plant crops and create nature zones. When completed, the space will include an allotment, nature area, pond, seating space, a campfire circle and a space to build and display outside artworks.



## *The Heritage at Risk Programme*

Historic England (HE) has released its annual Heritage at Risk (HAR) Register which identifies those sites that are most at danger of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. As ever, it makes depressing reading as many of the sites in our area continue to be on the Register. For over twenty years, the Register has checked on and identified the condition of our heritage. During this period, the risk assessment types has been extended to nearly 5,000 sites and now include listed buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, parks and gardens, battlefields, protected wrecks, places of worship and conservation areas. In order to be included in the HAR Register, sites must be assessed as being both at risk and designated. To find out what's at risk, search [Heritage at Risk Register](#) or download a [regional Register](#).

There are 1,699 designed landscapes on the current HE Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and these include private gardens, public parks and cemeteries, parkland and other green spaces. The assessment of the sites begins with an appraisal of the condition and vulnerability of each registered landscape. Any steps being taken by the owners to address problems are also taken into consideration. Listed buildings are the most commonly encountered type of designation and denote a structure as being of special architectural or historic interest. Many are associated with parks and gardens which contain garden buildings and eye-catchers.



Ashton Court is one such example as a large part of the house remains derelict and subject to slow but ongoing decay. The house has been the subject of negotiations between owners, Local Planning Authority, Historic England and other interested parties for many years. HE offered a grant in 2011 for project development work, the majority of which was completed by 2013. Options Appraisal was completed for Bristol City Council in 2019 and HE is in ongoing discussions with the Council.

In Bristol, the two lodges and attached garden walls opposite the former stables of Kings Weston house in Napier Miles Road continue to decay as no solution has been found. Built in 1763, by Robert Mylne, the square ashlar lodges are flanked by a central square pond. Standing empty, water ingress has led to deterioration of some areas of the stonework of the lodges. The pond suffers from water loss, extensive vegetation growth and damage to its lining.





The lily pond and seed house (now one of the lodges) at Kings Weston, 1889

Many designed landscapes have frequently been altered by development and any divided ownership often results in the loss of the unified conservation of the historic designs. This has happened to the former grounds of Brislington House, one of the first and most influential asylum landscapes in Britain. It is now subdivided between a sixth form college, private residential development, commercial sports facilities, industrial units and a management training centre. Despite this, some elements of the designed landscape survive although its designation was down-graded by HE in 2017. Mixed ownership of the landscape with their associated requirements continues to make this a vulnerable site.

On a more positive note, in Bath, the Beckford Tower Trust secured funding in 2019 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund along with a private donation two years later for restoration works and acquisition of the paddocks and grotto. Dominated by Beckford's Tower, the Lansdown Cemetery

incorporates features of a former pleasure ground and ride created by William Beckford in c1825-27. Its key design features have been neglected and continue to decline including the Grotto Tunnel. Also, the landscape has become fragmented as a result of different ownership

Park and garden entries are removed from the Register once plans are put in place to address issues and positive progress is being made but it is a slow progress to say the least.

## *The Holly and The Ivy*

*The holly and the ivy,  
When they are both full grown,  
Of all trees that are in the wood,  
The holly bears the crown:*



With its bright red berries and bright green leaves, the native holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) has long been associated with Christmas, mainly because holly branches continue to be used to decorate homes and make wreaths over the festive period. Mature trees can grow up to 15m and live for 300 years.

Holly is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers occur on different trees. The flowers are white with four petals and bloom any time from early spring onwards. Once pollinated by insects, the female flowers develop into scarlet berries which are such a familiar sight during the winter.

The holly is native in the UK and across Europe, North Africa and western Asia. It is common in woodland, scrub and hedgerows, especially in oak and beech woodland. John Evelyn described how the holly grew *spontaneously* and mentioned that in Dungeness, in Kent, it grew among the pebbles on the beach.



The dense cover of the tree provides good nesting sites for birds while its berries are a vital part of food for them in winter. The dry leaf litter may be used by hedgehogs and small mammals for hibernation. The flowers provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects; the leaves are eaten by caterpillars while the smooth leaves, which tend to be found towards the top of the tree, are a winter source of food for deer.

The wood is white, hard and fine-grained and can be easily stained and polished making it well adapted for furniture and patterned wood flooring. Walking sticks were usually made from holly, and Elizabeth Kent, writing in 1825, describes how the holly was used in making small toys and *trinkets* called Tunbridge-ware.



If the holly is regarded as a welcome sight, the Ivy (*Hedera helix*) has often had the opposite effect, especially in our gardens. It has long been unfairly accused of strangling and ultimately killing plants but research has shown this is not the case.



Ivy is an evergreen, woody climber which can grow to a height of 30m. It is found throughout the UK and is found in many habitats. There are two native subspecies of ivy, *Hedera helix* ssp. *helix* and *Hedera helix* ssp. *hibernica*. The subspecies *hibernica* does not climb but spreads across the ground. Mature plants produce yellowish green flowers which appear in small, dome-shaped clusters known as umbels in September to November; its fruits ripen from November to January and provide an important food source to birds. There are also many cultivated varieties of ivy, with differing leaves which are variable in size, colour, number and depth of lobes.

Elizabeth Kent wrote of its medicinal qualities by saying how :

*Among the many strange fancies dreamed of old with regard to trees, it has been said, that five Ivy berries beaten small, and made hot with some rose -water, in the rind of a pomegranate, being dropt into the ear, on the contrary side, will cure an aching tooth.*

The roots were used by leather-cutters to whet their knives upon and Evelyn describes how the ivy *with small industry* be made into, *curiously polished and flecked cups and boxes and even tables of great value.* Homer describes his heroes as drinking out of a cup made of Ivy -wood -*The beechen cup of Alcimedon had a lid of Ivy, carved with grapes.*

*The Holly and The Ivy* is a traditional English Christmas song with a long oral history that can be traced back to the C17. The association of the two plants with Christmas derives from their evergreen nature and the fact they each have berries. The lyrics and melody were first published by Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) in 1909. Apparently, Sharp was visiting the Cotswolds in January 1909 and heard a version of the song sung by Mary Clayton of Chipping Campden. Sharp transcribed the words and tune and published them together for the first time in his book *English Folk-Carols*.



## Clevedon Court

In the recent issue of Avon Gardens Trust Journal (No. 11, 2022), there was an article about Loyal Johnson's visit in 1928 to St Catherine's Court, near Bath. Along with his friend Sam Brewster, they had undertaken a three-month tour of about seventy gardens, covering 1,500 miles on bicycles with their belongings in a 12-inch case strapped to the back of each bicycle. Loyal kept a detailed diary of the trip describing the gardens they visited, places they stayed and people they met, creating a social record of inter-war Britain and its gardens.

Besides visiting St Catherine's Court, Loyal and Sam visited Clevedon Court. Below are two photographs taken about eighty years apart of the Octagon at Cleveland Court. One image is by Loyal Johnson and the later photograph is by Alan Kempton.



In his diary, Loyal Johnson commented how he had looked in the window of the *octagonal house* and had seen it was full of Elton-ware pottery made by Sir Edmund Elton. Loyal noted that the pottery had won many prizes and gold medals and was famous *especially for its artistic shapes and metallic lustres*.

The Octagon, as it is now called, 2010



## ***So Bristol is without one solitary recommendation***

These are the written words of James Peller Malcolm, an American-English topographer and engraver in his book *Excursions in Kent, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire and Somerset made in the years 1802, 1803 and 1805*, published in 1807.

He obviously did not enjoy his visit at all as he wrote :

*On way to Bristol by coach. Stayed at inn dirty etc, spoke with other passengers. One said 'Sir, Bristol is 100 years behind the rest of the world in improvements: men of immense, nay princely fortune, dine at two o'clock; money is obtained with avidity, with eagerness, but it is buried and lost in the hands of the possessor, through want of spirit to enjoy it; in short, the city is a mere sink of filth and smoke, and the best inn within it is the nastiest in England'.*

*You cannot cross the streets without danger from the sledges, used instead of wheeled vehicles. I dined with my family at the xxxxx: it is true, we had turtle but it was served in dishes, and eaten from plates, which had not been cleaned after previous use.*

## ***How many of these Collective Nouns do you know?***

The Reverend William Daniel wrote a series of rural sporting books in the early C19. His books covered all the traditional country sports of the period and chapters covered topics such as hunting, fishing and the game laws.

In volume 3 of *Rural Sports* published in 1807, Daniel gives a list of collective nouns which he states were *invented by Sportsmen of the Middle Ages, which it was necessary for them to be acquainted with: and some of the Terms are still used.*

Below are ten of the nouns taken from his list. To keep it seasonal the list comprises birds that continue to appear on the festive table. Several of the collective nouns have changed over the ensuing two hundred years since Daniel's book was published. For example, a group of pheasants is more likely to be called a bevy of pheasants these days

Badelynge of ducks

Bevy of quails

Brood of hens

Covey of partridges

Dule of turkeys

Fall of woodcocks

Gaggle of geese

Nye or nide of pheasants

Sold or sute of mallards

Wealk of snipes

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