



# Newsletter



## Avon Gardens Trust

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## *Message from The Chair*

We are now well into our 2023 Spring events. The last of our series of talks, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April at BRLSI, Bath proved highly successful, with historian and author Dr James Bartos delivering a fascinating insight into late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century ornamental wilderness gardens. We were saddened to have to cancel Marion Mako's April trip to some Cotswold gardens due to low numbers, but we still have a series of three garden visits to look forward to: a visit to Arts & Crafts gardens High Glanau Manor and Wyndcliffe Court in Monmouthshire in June, to the wonderfully eclectic garden of Caisson House in Combe Hay, Bath in July, and a behind-the-ropes tour of Tyntesfield's gardens with Head Gardener Paul Evans in September. There is something for all garden lovers, each representing a different and fascinating period of garden history.

We are now putting together next year's garden visits, and hope to include some gardens rarely open to visitors that participate in the National Garden Scheme. Anne Hills and I spent a wonderful day at the Penny Brohn Centre in March, which hosted members of the Somerset, Bristol & South Gloucestershire branch of the NGS. We engendered quite a lot of interest in the Trust and received offers from some of the garden owners for us to have a stall, in order to raise awareness of AGT. Do watch our website for details of these gardens' Open Days and help manning the stall would be much appreciated. Please contact me if you have suggestions for a 2024 garden visit [chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk). In the meantime, I look forward to meeting some of you on our garden visits.

### *Tulips at Dyrham Park*



The garden at Dyrham Park is bursting into life this spring with a wonderful display of coloured scent. Clouds of daffodils fill the orchard with crocuses, blue chinodoxa, pulmonaria and primroses springing up around the garden. Their scent mixes with that of wild garlic in the terraces, its white flowers mingling with bluebells during April .

April and early May are the optimum times for the flower most associated with Dyrham House; the tulip. Tulips have long been a highlight of the garden in spring, grown at Dyrham Park since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and today have become a key feature of the long avenue borders as well as Sphynx Court. Once the bulbs have flowered they are lifted and replanted in the orchard the following autumn to create a random 'Persian Carpet' effect. They have major links with the house's founder William Blathwayt who worked in the Netherlands back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The house contains some magnificent multi-layered blue Delft tulip vases, a single tulip placed in each opening.

*Kay Ross*



## *Programme*

***Wednesday 28 June***

***A visit to the gardens of High Glanau Manor and Wyndcliffe Court in Monmouthshire***



Following on from our highly successful lecture by Helena Gerrish, we have arranged to visit two gardens designed by H. Avray Tipping in the early twentieth century.

High Glanau Manor is an important Arts & Crafts house set in 12 acres of gardens designed by H. Avray Tipping in 1922. Tipping was the Architectural Editor of *Country Life* magazine from 1907 until his death in 1933, and worked alongside Gertrude Jekyll from whom he drew inspiration for his own gardens. His works include Chequers, Mathern Palace and Wyndcliffe Court. We will meet at High Glanau Manor where Helena will guide us around the gardens. We will lunch there as her guests, before travelling the short journey to Wyndcliffe Court where we will be led on a garden tour ending with tea and cakes. The host, Helena Gerrish bought High Glanau in 2002 and has undertaken a complete historic garden restoration in accord with the design of H. Avray Tipping.

Cost for the full day to include the morning garden tour, 2 course lunch with wine at High Glanau, and afternoon tour and tea at Wyndcliffe Court is just £60.00.

## **Monday 24th July**

### **A Visit to the garden at Caisson House. Combe Hay, Bath, BA2 7EF at 2 pm**



This is a wonderfully eclectic garden set in the most beautiful English countryside around a gorgeous Georgian house built in 1815. It is a mixture of herbaceous borders, topiary, ponds and rills, a walled garden with fruit trees, greenhouses, flower and vegetable beds. There are wildflower meadows surrounding the garden and the disused Somersetshire Coal Canal runs through the property with a great variety of species and biodiversity, including native orchids.

Caisson House, listed Grade II, is so named due to its proximity to the site of the 1790s caisson lock on the Somersetshire Coal Canal. The innovatory caisson, one of three, was designed to provide a means of achieving the change in level on this branch of the canal. Sadly it proved inoperable, and all three were abandoned in January 1800. In May 1801, having moved to Bath upon her father's retirement, Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra about plans to "take the long-planned walk to the Cassoon" with her uncle, a popular excursion at the time. The owners Amanda Honey and her husband Phil, and Tristan their gardener, will be on hand to answer any questions during the visit. The cost for this visit is £25.00 which includes an introductory welcome before exploring the gardens, followed by tea, coffee and cake.

Booking for the above events is through our website  
<https://www.avongardenstrust.org.uk/events/>



**5 August at 10.am**

**A Guided visit to the gardens of Hampton House, the old Homeopathic Hospital, St Michaels Hill, Cotham, Bristol, BS8 1PH**

**with Dr Clare Hickman**

**Organised by The Gardens Trust.**

Now known as Hampton House, the purpose-built Homeopathic Hospital in Clifton, Bristol, was opened on the 20th of May 1925. Financially backed by Melville Wills, of the Wills tobacco firm, who was also President of the Hospital, the gardens were an integral part of its therapeutic design. At the time they proclaimed that 'every ward has its own separate sun balcony for open-air treatment', and the garden itself contained features such as revolving shelters, a pond and Pulhamite rockeries. Most are long gone but traces remain, and you can see the echoes of the domestic garden owned by Wills and his wife as well as other institutional settings. What remains of the gardens is now part of the University of Bristol estate, and on this visit Dr Clare Hickman, an expert in the history of hospital gardens, will talk about the particular history of the Homeopathic Hospital as well as share oral histories of other 'open-air' hospital treatments from other locations. This will encourage consideration of the interlinking of spaces, both internal and external, and the importance of nature as part of the therapeutic experience.

There are limited places available for this visit, and booking is essential. Tickets £25, for members of the Gardens Trust, non-member places may be available if space allows. All the info and the booking link are here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bristol-walk-hampton-house-tickets-594910983767?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>.



*Hampton House*

## *Visits*

### ***10 & 11 June 10.30 - 5 pm Green Squares and Secret Gardens Clifton, Bristol***



This part of Bristol is rich in private communal garden squares and the gardens that lie hidden behind elegant Georgian terraces and many will be open to the public over this weekend. In addition many of the gardens offer entertainment with refreshments, stalls, live music and talks enabling visitors to enjoy the beauty of these peaceful urban havens.

Tickets cover both days 10.30 – 5 pm and are available in advance from Eventbrite (£6) and on the day (£5) from 10:30am under the archway on Boyce's Avenue in Clifton Village and from selected gardens listed on the web.  
([www.gssg-bristol.com](http://www.gssg-bristol.com))

### ***An Ornamental Wilderness An appreciation of the lecture given by Dr James Bartos on Saturday 22 April***

This last lecture in the winter series arranged by AGT was a resounding success. Dr James Bartos gave an illuminating talk about late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century wilderness gardens created by the wealthy and influential. He described an 'Ornamental Wilderness' as an area of tree lined walks, often in a



rectangular form depicting the St Andrews Cross, with interlocking paths running across or offsetting them. The wilderness areas were typically surrounded on the outer perimeter by high hedging, which provided secrecy and privacy from any onlookers. Many of the greater English gardens had an ornamental wilderness incorporated into their garden schemes, which later developed with areas of seating, tables or formal border planting in some corner areas. Such gardens included Hampton Court, Wrest, Broughton and Blenheim, all now lost, though a few remain at St Paul's Waldenbury, Chiswick and Bramham.

A Wilderness, a place to get lost in!

*Peter Hills*



## Holker Hall – Cumbria

In September 2022, June and I went on an organised four-day garden tour of the Lake District. First stop was Holker Hall. It is situated in the flood plain of the Leven River looking South towards Morecambe Bay and Northwest to the Lake District. It is well clear of potential flooding, has neutral soil and benefits from the Gulf Stream.



It was built as a modest lodge in the early seventeenth century and eventually passed to the Dukes of Devonshire to add to their already vast estates. For several generations these all passed, under primogeniture, undivided to the eldest son or the next if the eldest had died.

This broke down when in three generations, the male heir line died out twice. In 1890, George Cavendish, the sixth Duke, died unmarried. His heir was a cousin, William. To put it mildly, this Duke just did not want to live at Chatsworth (in the middle of the Dukeries) closely surrounded by the estates of five other Dukes. The constant invitations to balls, shoots, hunts, and other entertainments were just not for him. Then he discovered Holker, where he could be himself and enjoy a family life.

He did little with the estate. He brought Joseph Paxton up from Chatsworth briefly to open the ridge to the West of the house and to plant some exotic trees in rides. Paxton also designed a large conservatory, now demolished. Then in 1871, a significant part of the house burnt down destroying a dozen old master paintings. It had to be rebuilt.

The seventh Duke died in 1891 and the title and estate passed to his son, Spencer. He was in his late fifties and had a successful career in politics. His life was firmly London and Chatsworth based. He allowed his nephew, Victor Cavendish to live in Holker. When Spencer died heirless in 1908, the title and all the estates except one passed to Victor.

A sign of changing times was that the eighth Duke felt sympathy for Victor's brother, Richard, so he left Holker and 17,000 acres to him so that he had a family home. The third generation of this offshoot still lives there. The current owner was created a life peer, Baron Cavendish of Furness, by Margaret Thatcher 35 years ago. Thomas Mawson had done some work at Holker for Spencer in 1901 but Victor brought him back in 1910 to completely re-design the formal gardens around the South and West side of the house. Mawson, a largely self-taught landscape designer living in Windermere at the time, had established a strong reputation nationally and internationally.

His, and his competitors' style was a complete change from almost anything that had gone before. Gone were long vistas magnifying the views. In their place were intimate, closed garden rooms as refuges from the rough outside world. This was an era of WW1, the Spanish Flu epidemic and the Depression. So, in his paradise was colour, texture, small ponds and rills, decorative paths and seats all surrounded by thick eight-foot-high hedges and walls to keep the world away and the residents safe. Inside there are playful topiary and pleached arches and tunnels.

The current owner, Lord Richard Cavendish, has moved the focus back to the park with a splendid Slate Sundial by Sir Mark Lennox Boyd, a labyrinth, and a cascade. I think that this was our fourth visit to Holker over quite a few years. Even when it was pouring down on one occasion, it is a welcoming, friendly place. On this trip, the sun shone, and it was marvellous. Oh, and the Cream Teas are second to none.

## *The National Gardens Scheme in Avon*

Kay Ross and Anne Hills accepted an invitation from Su Mills, County Organiser of the Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire branch of the National Gardens Scheme (NGS), to attend their annual meeting at the Penny Brohn Centre in Pill, near Portishead and to meet a number of owners and gardens that are open for the National Gardens Scheme this spring. We were made very welcome both by Su and her members and by Ashley Akin-Smith of the Penny Brohn Centre itself. They too have a wonderful garden which opens for the NGS, so we have been invited to have an AGT stall there this summer as well.

Kay gave a short talk about the work of the Trust and several garden owners expressed an interest and also offered to let us have a stall on their Open Garden days. We are now in touch with seven gardens whose owners are willing to let us display the AGT information in order to spread awareness of the work the Trust does and hopefully sign up some new members.

It was a very encouraging meeting, and we also have the opportunity to book one or two of the gardens for private visits next year.

There are some wonderful NGS open gardens coming up this spring and summer, a number of them also listed gardens featured on our Gazeteer <https://directory.avongardenstrust.org.uk/> including:

Hanham Court, Hanham Abbots - Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th June 11-4  
University of Bristol Botanic garden, Stoke Bishop - Sunday 2nd July 10-5

## *Research and Planning*

### *Dr Pole's Garden: 14 St James's Square*



A view from the entrance in York Street, with two gardeners at work, at 14 St James's Square, c 1806

Avon Gardens Trust has been approached by Peggy Stembridge regarding a fascinating project.

Peggy writes "The late James Russell had contributed many interesting and scholarly articles to Avon Gardens Trust publications over the years. For the last dozen or so, he had also been working on the history of



No. 14 St James's Square and some of its owners, including Dr Pole. The Bristol Art Gallery has the important group of delightful paintings illustrating an early 19th century town garden, attributed to Dr Pole c. 1805

It seems an attractive project for AGT to be involved with where required. And if possible to produce as an independent publication; with Bristol and Avon Archeological Society (BAAS), the chief group James was particularly associated with. It was always a complex project with several people and groups involved but, as time has passed, illness and retirements had slowed it to a standstill. However, we now have all the material James had put together, including correspondence, from his BAAS estate, and copies of the Pole transparencies prepared by the late Martin Burnham, AGT graphic designer, with captions. With increased interest in garden history, and numbers of suitable outlets for an independent, joint publication, it seems a good time to revive this project, and not lose valuable research."

We very much hope you will agree that Avon Gardens Trust should undertake it, with co-operation from BAAS. In order to do this we will need volunteers to help assess the material and prepare publication. Please do contact us if you would like to be involved in this very worthwhile project.

*chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk*

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## ***Calling all Researchers***

Do you like delving into archived records, wondering what you will find? Do you enjoy finding out little-known aspects of historic parks and gardens? If so please read on:



The Avon Gardens Trust has a well-documented record of the parks and gardens in the former Avon area. Most of them can be viewed on the Directory section of the Avon Gardens Trust website. On a separate list there are 40 Parks and Gardens on Historic England's Register which

we now want to review, to make sure we have up to date information. This helps when we respond to development applications which may impact adversely on these gardens.

We are living in the internet age with many more sources readily at hand, so it is unnecessary to include all material that can be found by a quick online enquiry. We do, however, want to create links to this information and the database is set up to include space for such links.

The sort of information we are looking for can be in any format. For example, a typically thorough source can be Conservation Management Plans, although journals and newspaper articles, records from Garden interest groups, Local Authority Archives, and perhaps Planning consent records can be equally productive.

Anyone interested is welcome to help with this task and can choose to do as much or as little as they wish. Most of the work will involve searching sources online, but could also include some in-person research at Record Offices or Estate offices. Please get in touch with me, Gill Clarke, via [research@avongardenstrust.co.uk](mailto:research@avongardenstrust.co.uk)

Together we will work out the best way to go about exploring local historic gardens. Remember to take a look at the 40 Registered sites and see what you would like to research.

*Gill Clarke*

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## ***Planning Application - Thornbury***

### ***Disappointing Appeal Outcome***

An application for development of land north of Thornbury has been allowed following an Appeal. Developers have been granted outline permission for a mixed development, including up to 595 homes across a 36-hectare green-field site. South Gloucestershire Council opposed the scheme because of its location, its heritage impact, and its effect on agricultural land. Sadly, Avon Gardens Trust was not notified of this application and therefore was unable to make a representation. This is a complex scheme involving highways and housing issues as well as heritage impact. Regarding the heritage assets, the inspector scrutinised the impact on Thornbury Castle, parts of which are Grade I listed, and the Grade I listed park and garden. There are other listed buildings included within the castle complex, which is now an hotel. The site is also within the setting of the Shieling school, St Mary's church and the Thornbury Conservation Area. The inspector recognised that some of the heritage assets are of exceptional value. and that the proposal would develop land formerly included in the castle estate. However, he gave more weight to the public benefits of the scheme and the report concluded that although there would be harm to the significance of a number of heritage assets because the appeal development lay within their setting, the package of public benefits arising would outweigh that harm.

*Anne Hills*





*Thornbury. Castle*

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## ***Spring 2024 Lecture Season***

After the success of our Winter/Spring Lecture Series this year, held on Saturday afternoons at the Bath Literary & Scientific Institution, we have organised another for the Winter and Spring of 2023-4. Garden history is the theme of our forthcoming lectures, and we begin at our AGM on 28 October with Trish Gibson on Brenda Colvin, one of the most important landscape designers of the twentieth century. Trish is followed by Dr Carole Fry on 27 January 2024, who will be talking about the impact of the Palladian Revival in architecture on the celebrated landscapes of the early eighteenth century such as Stowe, Chiswick and our own Prior Park. Dr Helen Lawrence will be speaking about the Georgian architect Thomas Archer and his little-known, but ground-breaking, schemes for landscape gardens on 24 February. The focus switches from the eighteenth century to the Arts & Crafts period on 23 March with Dr Wendy Bishop's lecture on Harry Inigo Triggs, who created stunning architectural gardens such as the Gibbs family's Barrow Court, just outside Bristol. Finally, Christopher Pound, renowned expert on the history of Europe's spas, will be talking about Spa gardens on 27th April.