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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This month there are hints of spring in the garden and the lanes: celandines, primroses, narcissi and crocus bringing much needed colour to a rather dark world at the moment. We certainly brightened up a couple of Saturdays in January and February with wonderful talks by Dr Carole Fry and Dr Helen Lawrence-Beaton (pages 6-7). It was good to see so many members and some new faces, a great start to our 2024 season of lectures.

We have been busy in the last few weeks with a new collaborative venture with the Garden Trusts of Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. We will be running a day of Garden Research at Wiltshire Records Office on Tuesday 23rd April for members who would like to learn about how to research the history of Avon's gardens and landscapes in order to add to our Gazetteer (page 4). We are collaborating once again with the National Garden Scheme in order to spread the word about the Trust and also arrange to have a stall at some of Avon's Open Gardens this year. If you would like to help man a stall this summer, please do let us know. It's a lovely way to meet fellow garden enthusiasts and tell them about AGT, and there is always wonderful cake!

We have some terrific garden visits lined up as well, the first of which is the wonderful South Kelding garden of Wendy and Barry Smale. Created from three fields, they have created a fascinating arboretum based on continents, with a pond and wetland area beside a babbling Pipley Brook, which historically separates Somerset and Gloucestershire. April will see hellebores, primroses and many more spring flowers throughout the gardens.

We have been very heartened by a number of grant applications from primary schools already this year. All are creating raised beds to grow fruit and vegetables, create herb and sensory areas and plant fruit trees, both as an educational experience for the children and a stimulating and enjoyable place in which to spend time outdoors. With more of us on the grants committee we would be able to visit more of these schools and see how the gardens are progressing. If you would like to help with this, please do let us know. We need to provide schools not just with funds but also the wherewithal to find alternative ways to acquire equipment, tools, seeds and plants from other sources. We continue to look at all planning applications which involve historic Avon landscapes, often alerted by concerned members. If you know of an historic garden or landscape near you which may be affected by a planning application (or, in some cases, without one having been lodged), please do let us know.

I look forward to seeing many of you at future events and hopefully at our Research Day.

## **Changes to our Booking and Membership pages**

Pete Hills has done an amazing job re-organising both systems to provide both a seamless Event booking and a Membership system. No more downloading forms to fill in, just an easy interactive online one. The new Ticket Tailor booking system involves a small booking fee, but we think it's worth it as the Eventbrite system was becoming more expensive, especially for processing different payments for members and non-members. We think it is fairer to be able to charge a wee bit more for a non-member with the added incentive that membership on the day will mean this is refunded. If renewing your membership, please do check that you have the new AGT bank details for Nat West and not the old CAP ones (I was caught out by this last year!).

## **News From the Committee**

### **Hello to David Evans**

We were very thrilled, and relieved, to welcome Peter Hills back to the Committee, not least as our Membership Secretary, and we are very grateful for all his work with our online forms, which involved a lot of very thorough research and testing. We are also delighted to welcome David Evans as both a new Trustee and Committee member. There will, of course, be a formal vote at our October AGM but we think it pertinent to welcome him now, in order to pursue our goals for the coming year. David has been involved with our planning sub-committee for some time, offering invaluable advice and expertise.

### **Urgent Appeal for new Committee members and Volunteers**

Thanks to Peter and David, we now have six Trustees but we still need more, as well as more members of the AGT Committee. We need both a Secretary to organise the admin and a Marketing person to help us with social media and advertising our events as well as volunteers for all areas of our work. We are a friendly group and have around 5-6 meetings a year, so please, if you feel you would like to become involved or would like to know more, contact us at [chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk). As an incentive, we are also planning one or two Committee & Volunteer special outings during 2024.

# The South West County Gardens Trusts

## Volunteers Garden History Research Day

**Tuesday 23rd April 2024 at Swindon & Wiltshire History Centre, Cocklebury Road, Chippenham, SN15 3QN 10.30 a.m.—3.15 pm**

AGT are delighted to be part of a collaboration with the Garden Trusts of Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire for a Volunteers Garden History Research Day at Wiltshire's History Centre in Chippenham. This day is aimed at anyone who would like to do research for Avon Gardens Trust on our historic gardens and landscapes. No experience is necessary, just enthusiasm.

We will have some archivist expertise on hand to help navigate you through the various resources available and show you how to set about researching a garden or landscape.

Some of the issues we will address are:

- Research sources
- Research best practice
- Permissions
- Setting up a project
- Collecting oral histories
- Recording on-site?
- Guidance on databases
- What to do with the material which we collect
  - HERs - Historic Environment Records
  - KYP – Know Your Place
  - PGUK – Parks & Gardens UK website
  - Publication
  - Copyright for images and written data





## Programme for the Day

10.30am Arrive from 10.30am for coffee and biscuits

11.00am Introductions and explanation of the structure of day

11.10am Why research historic designed landscapes?

- Increase understanding → better protection
- Help prepare planning responses
- Getting started – forming a group, finding sites, getting permission, research resources
- Claire de Carle will explain her experiences in Bucks and a little information about how they have recorded their work. Including referencing work and copyright issues
- Colin and Jo Johnston, local archivists – will explain specific local resources

12.40pm Discussion – research experiences of the SW CGTs. What would we like to achieve?

Including resources available from the Gardens Trust

1.00-2.00pm Break for Lunch, with opportunity to look at copies of maps + examples.

2.00pm What to do with the research and why?

- adding to the historic record + engaging new audiences with interesting stories about sites (website, social media, events, leaflets etc)
- Discuss example of achievements that have come out of research in our CGTs

2.50pm Next steps, discussion & AOB, including support for new researchers within the CGTs

3.15pm End

### Travel Directions

Located near to Chippenham station, there is also plenty of parking at the Centre.

Details of directions, parking and location from Chippenham railway station can be found at this link: <https://www.wshc.org.uk/visiting-the-centre/how-to-find-us.html>

Lunch will be provided as well as tea and coffee – please let Mrs Rhyddian Roper know of any dietary requirements [chairman@wiltshiregt.org.uk](mailto:chairman@wiltshiregt.org.uk)

**The day is absolutely Free but booking is essential. Places are limited so please email [chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk) to register your interest and to find out more information - or phone 07890 267845.**

## January Lecture—'Neo-Palladianism & the Eighteenth Century Landscape' with Dr Carole Fry

We commenced our winter series of lectures with a well attended audience hearing Carole outline the classical neo-Palladianism style that dominated the 18th century buildings of the period. Social classes and political affiliation influenced garden design of the time, such as the



Gothic temple at Stowe. Carole delved into the myth that a single party – the Whigs – were the sole benefactors of this movement, but illustrated how social divides created the style that has endured the passage of time.

Wilbury Court, Wiltshire, built by William Benson in 1709, was the first 18th century neo-Palladian building in England, constructed many years before Lord Burlington's Chiswick Villa. An ambitious man, Benson travelled widely including to Germany, managing to curry favour with the future King George of England. He was greatly influenced by the design of the house and



gardens at Herrenhausen, and together with his interest in water engineering, brought the neo-Palladian style from Germany to Wilbury in the first decade of the 18th century. This style grew in popularity through the social network of the day. At Stourhead, Henry Hoare commissioned Colen Campbell in the 1720s to rebuild the house in neo-Palladian style. Whilst the Benson

and Hoare family had been joined through marriage, Benson and Campbell would have known each other well through their respective positions in the Court and Government. Benson was a friend of John Aislabe and that link resulted in the design of the neo-Palladian water gardens at Studley Royal. Although Carole clearly demonstrated the non-partisan appeal of the neo-Palladian style, it was still used as a political statement.

Lord Bolingbroke, exiled to La Source in the Loire Valley, used the garden design there to show his feelings of rejection through inscriptions on sculptures and Lord Cobham used the Temple of

Ancient Virtue at Stowe to glorify the Patriot Whigs, and the ruined structure nearby, The Temple of Modern Virtue, with its headless statue, to signify the despised Walpole administration.

This was a well-illustrated and clearly presented talk. The lengthy question session that followed demonstrated the interest in Bath of the classical style that endures today.

### **February Lecture - 'The relationship of landscape and architecture – The work of Thomas Archer (1668-1743)' with Dr Helen Lawrence-Beaton**

Helen Lawrence-Beaton gave us an inspiring lecture on Thomas Archer (1668-1743). An English Baroque architect, he designed some of the most significant garden buildings of his time, such as those at Wrest Park, Silsoe, Chatsworth as well as many city



churches and residences such as Russell House in Covent Garden. Thomas Archer was a contemporary of Hawksmoor, Vanbrugh and Christopher Wren, yet his is not a household name. As well as building some fine country houses, his garden building designs set him apart from his contemporaries in the grandeur, style and sheer magnificence of his work. He worked alongside his patrons to establish landscapes and garden features to entertain and amaze. Little is known or recorded of his work, but the legacy that is to view amazes by the sheer extravagance of his



work. His Baroque architecture is still evident in both houses and garden features at such illustrious 18th century estates as Chatsworth, Wrest Park and Heythrop Hall in Oxfordshire. Some of his elegant garden buildings are still in evidence, not least the temple or cascade house, built for the First Duke of Devonshire in 1703 at the top of the Cascade. Archer's work has a more continental feel than that of any other English architect of his day,

and may well have been influenced by what he saw when visiting Italy on the Grand Tour. A fascinating insight into some unique garden buildings, delivered to a captivated audience.

Gill Clarke



# Bathscape Landscape Partnership Project

## Volunteer with the Views & Vistas Project

The Views & Vistas project is a record of people's favourite nominated landscape views throughout the Bathscape area so that we can better understand and enjoy them. Forty views have been identified as important by people who live in and near Bath.



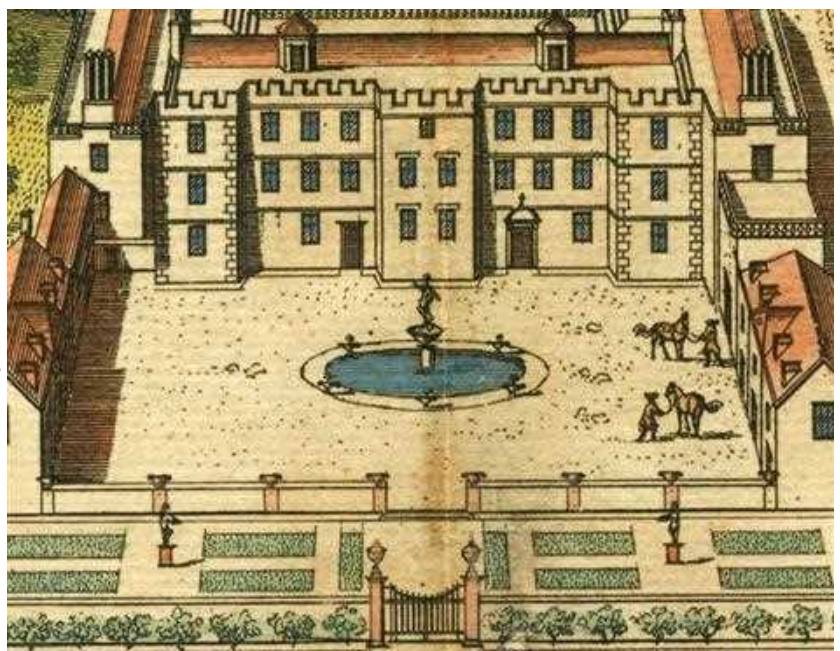
Bath Preservation Trust & Bathscape are looking for volunteers to help with recording the Bath viewpoints, and to venture outside over the seasons to experience these views. The work takes many forms including traditional online or archival research, and fieldwork and photography to record aspects in the view that are of historical, geological or natural interest and importance to local communities.

They are really keen for the community to help them to share and celebrate the importance of Bath's local landscape views. To find out more about the landscape setting of Bath and the Bathscape Landscape Partnership Project visit [www.bathscape.co.uk](http://www.bathscape.co.uk).

*'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 by Jane Austen.

## The Henbury Neptune

Bristol City Council's Senior Conservation Architect, David Martyn, has brought to AGT's attention the plight of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century statue of Neptune that formerly stood in the gardens of the Great House at Henbury.





It is shown on the Kip engraving of that house and after rediscovery at some point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was transferred to the garden at Henbury Manor. The statue survives, albeit in a poor and declining condition. The Special School that now occupies the manor, which is owned by Bristol City Council, were unaware of its interest, and have no resources to deal with it.

Some time ago discussions were started to transfer it to Blaise Castle Museum, but the plan faltered. We would very much like to be able to facilitate this transfer, and will keep you posted.

### **Puzzle at Kingsweston**

David Martyn, as Chair of KWAG (Kings Weston Action Group) has also posed us an intriguing puzzle. They have found three fragments of a structure with a clay surface, apparently designed to look like rustic tree trunks. They have no idea what they came from, but all three were a surface find in the ornamental View Garden, part of the walled garden complex. The Italianate garden is believed to date from the 1860s. The outer clay surface is modelled, but the interior is an odd material, a vitreous, bubbled substance apparently used as a filler? Could it be part of a Victorian planter or other ornament? Is this something you've ever come across, or do you know anyone else who might have an idea? Email [chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:chairman@avongardenstrust.org.uk)



## Dan Pearson talks at Bath Preservation Trust

Several AGT members were privileged to hear Dan Pearson speak in January at a public lecture in Bath organised by the Bath Preservation Trust.

**Dan Pearson** OBE is an English landscape designer, who has undertaken an enormous range of work in both the public and private sphere from his practice in London. He now lives in Swainswick, just north of Bath. He is famous for his work at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and in particular the Laurent- Perrier Chatsworth Garden in 2015, which won a gold medal. His naturalistic planting and use of perennials is well known.

In a fascinating talk he focussed on his work in the public realm; at Kings Cross in the planting in the major redevelopment of that site, and the Garden Museum in Lambeth (below) both within the courtyard of the museum itself and now with the development of a local park and open space adjacent to the site. For more details see <http://danpearsonstudio.com/projects/>



He designed the garden for the pioneering Maggie's Centre at Charing Cross Hospital. Maggie's is named after breast cancer victim Maggie Keswick Jencks who helped to develop a new approach to cancer care ensuring people do not "lose the joy of living in the fear of dying". They are based in NHS hospitals but are purpose built by leading architects and landscape designers to provide holistic care and support to those diagnosed with cancer.

He then described his involvement with the development of a new Maggie's Centre that is being developed at the Bristol Royal Infirmary adjacent to the Oncology Centre with the support of Penny Brohn UK, and the thinking involved to design a landscape that works with the building, the site and the surrounding buildings to create a harmonious, serene environment which will give solace to patients, their families, and staff in the years to come. <https://www.maggies.org/>

Selena Gray



## Avon Wildlife Trust and The Friends of William Champion's Garden join forces to create a Nature Action Zone in Warmley

Avon Wildlife Trust are launching a new project in Warmley, South Gloucestershire, in partnership with [@southglosCouncil](#) to support local people to make a difference for wildlife - the Warmley Nature Action Zone. The nature action zone is an area where streets and neighbours come together to make their own Community Nature Reserves and where public open spaces will be improved for wildlife too. Whether that's planting for pollinators across front gardens, creating an orchard along a whole street, building a hedgehog highway, or helping neighbours to delight in the creatures they share their neighbourhoods with.

<https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/warmley-nature-action-zone>

The Friends of William Champion's Garden are delighted to be part of this scheme, helping link some of these zones with this historic public green space in the heart of Warmley. The recent torrential rainfall has helped refill the 18th century Echo Pond and clearance by the Friends has resulted in the re-appearance of the arched tunnel linking the pond with the original canal, once fed by Siston Brook.

Meanwhile, working with the Landscape Team at SGT, the Friends of William Champion's Garden have been able to acquire hundreds of plug plants for the garden thanks to their WECA (West of England Combined Authority) grant. Other planting will include some specimen trees, a native hedgerow with estate fencing and a wild flower turf strip.

Their thriving heritage orchard has benefitted from a free donation of horse manure, ensuring the fruit trees, all of which would have been known in Champion's day, will continue to flourish.

Kay Ross





## News from around Avon

### National Garden Scheme Volunteer for position of County Organiser

Great Gardens, Great Cake!

A National Garden Scheme volunteer required for the position of County Organiser to lead the team in Bristol, Bath and South Gloucestershire. This is a great opportunity to meet and work with some wonderful people while raising much needed funds for Nursing and Health Charities including, Macmillan, Marie Curie and Hospice UK.

Please contact Su Mills to arrange an informal chat about the role at [su.mills@ngs.org.uk](mailto:su.mills@ngs.org.uk)

Tel: 01454 615438

### Caisson Gardens, Combe Hay, Bath

The owners of Caisson Gardens, which are located beside the historic Somerset Coal Canal's Caisson lock, are opening for their first full season of Open Gardens. Fourteen years in the making, many of you experienced this wonderful garden with the owners Amanda and Phil on an AGT visit last year.

Caisson Gardens will be open for a select few open garden days in Spring 2024

14th April

19th & 20th April

26th & 27th April

This is an opportunity to wander around our slice of paradise, enjoying teeming wildlife or exploring the historical coal canal which threads through the property. Or simply a chance to eat some delicious homemade cakes, which are not to be missed! Please note, pre-booking is essential for these as there are limited tickets available. Booking is via our website.

### Doynton Seed Swap and Plant Sale

Location: Doynton Village Hall, Toghill Lane, Doynton, Bristol, BS30 5SY.

Date and time: Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 10am - 12pm

Admission: Free

### Seedy Saturday (NE Somerset)

Location: Timsbury Conygre Hall, nr Bath, BA2 OJQ

Date and time: Saturday 9th March, 10am to 2pm

Admission: £1 adults, Under 16s Free

More information: [www.seedysaturday.org.uk](http://www.seedysaturday.org.uk)



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## Upcoming AGT Events— Spring 2024

All lectures at Bath Royal Scientific and Literary Institution, Queen Square, Bath. Pre-booking via <https://www.avongardenstrust.org.uk/events/> (if non-internet pay on the day). All Lectures start at 2.30 pm

**Saturday 23 March 2024** Lecture 'The Edwardian architect and garden designer Harry Inigo Triggs' with Dr Wendy Bishop

**Tuesday 9 April 2024** – a private visit for spring planting to the gardens at **South Kelding**, Upton Cheyney 2-4 pm



**Saturday 27 April 2024** Lecture 'The Legacy of Spa Gardens – Bath Spa Gardens' with Christopher Pound

**Tuesday, 14 May 2024** - A private visit to the gardens at Parsonage Farm, Publow 2-4 pm

