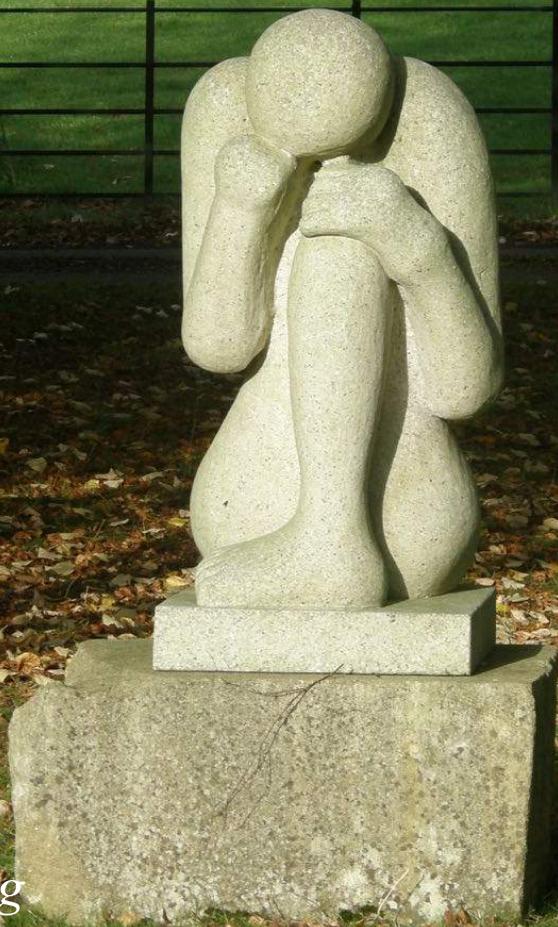


Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

Issue 62

Autumn 2016



Featuring

Exciting Restoration at Halswell - p.5

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From the Editors

What a colourful Autumn it has been. We have never seen such depth and variety in the trees and hedgerows - from vivid yellow to fiery reds. So here is the Autumn issue to light up the approaching Winter darkness. Some good articles on interesting Somerset gardens, on growing Patagonian plants here, to how to be patient with ground elder; and lots of information on what is happening inside the SGT – from what the Council is doing to reliving visits to fascinating gardens this year.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond
bondchristopher@btconnect.com



From the Chairman

Dear Members,

It has been a marvellous summer of outings arranged by Diana and her team, the last one being to Bowood, headed by Anne Page. Two excellent guides showed us around the house, garden and park, including an area not normally open to the public. The sun shone as we walked as far as the cascade, where we admired many of the trees and were able to appreciate the finer points of this Capability Brown landscape.

Our AGM this year was at Yarlinton House, the home of Count and Countess Charles de Salis. We were blessed with a beautiful evening and were able to enjoy the lovely garden with a drink and canapes provided by the Events Committee. During the meeting I appealed for volunteers to

join me on a Gardens Trust Training day at Westonbirt House. Two members joined me and it was good fun hearing the history





of the house, going around the garden, looking at the Italian garden and hearing about plans for the restoration of the lake. We were given a delicious lunch by the school cooks but the lectures were quite intensive and left us fairly exhausted.

Next year the Trust's programme will open with the Batcombe Supper lecture on

Wednesday, March 15th. The lecturer is Alistair Roach, and he is talking about "*Miniature Ships in Designed Landscapes*". I sat next to Alistair at a birthday party a year ago and was completely fascinated when he talked about his subject.

Camilla Carter 2016

The Trust welcomes the following New Members

Professor & Mrs Richard Frewer, Charlcombe, Bath

Mrs Diana Hoare, Castle Cary

Mrs Rosemary Lee, Shepton Beauchamp, Ilminster

Mrs Margaret Maunder, Somerton

Mrs Frances Neal, North Cheriton

Mrs Jane Stebbings, Sutton Montis

Miss M Stephens, North Petherton

Mr & Mrs Charles Vaughan-Johnson, Langport

Amanda Wills, Milton, Martock

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THE SOMERSET GARDENS TRUST

President

Lady Elizabeth Gass

Chairman

Camilla Carter
Honeywick House
Honeywick
Nr Castle Cary
Somerset BA7 7LP
Tel: 01963 351106
cchoneywick@hotmail.co.uk

Treasurer and Trust Secretary

Stuart Senior
Bull Street
Creech St Michael
Taunton, TA3 5PW
01823 442344
stuart_senior@msn.com

Minutes Secretary

Susan Thorne
Barton House
Kingston St Mary
Taunton, TA2 8HH
01823 451693
STBartonHouse@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

Mary ter Braak
Harcobes
Trendle Lane
Bicknoller, TA4 4EG
01984 656633
info@somersetgardenstrust.org.uk

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Restoration at Halswell Park

Edward Strachan gives an encouraging progress report

Work has been continuing on the restoration of Halswell House and its pleasure gardens at Mill Wood. On 28th October, we celebrated the ‘topping out’ of the Tudor manor house roof, whose 400sqm has been now fully repaired for the first time in over 100 years. The old Tudor manor house, the part of Halswell which has been so long neglected, is now water-tight, and it will be a relief no longer to think about the bats – safely settled in their new purpose-built abode in the roof vault of the coach house – and asbestos, and wet and dry rot, death watch beetle, rotting timbers, and leaks. The full exterior of the manor house now awaits completion with the replacement of new finials, new lead downpipes, and render.



In January and February Simon Bonvoisin of the Nicholas Pearson Partnership, our

“All are now bursting out of their guards, and seem to be enjoying the conditions at Mill Wood.”

landscape consultant, oversaw the planting of almost 4500 native trees: 2750 Oak, 950 Beech, 250 Sweet Chestnut, 250 Wild Cherry, 200 Hornbeam, 20 Scots Pine, and a gift of *Zelkova carpinifolia* from the Somerset Gardens Trust. These approximately reflect the original planting of Mill Wood, lost when sold to farmers in the 1950’s. It is a pleasure seeing these trees grow over the year, and all seem to be doing very well, with no losses to date. All

are now bursting out of their guards, and seem to be enjoying the conditions at Mill Wood. As my personal track record in planting trees tends to see attrition of about 50%, I have realised I will leave tree-planting to the experts.

The Somerset Gardens Trust had also played a generous part in the great replanting, and on a cold and

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windswept February day, Camilla Carter, Chairman of the SGT, joined me in planting an *Acer trauvetteri*, a symbolic gift from the Trust, on the site of Lady Tynte's Hut, long gone now, but apparently designed in the *chinoiserie* style.

“a lost Arcadian world of ruins and Ozymandian vanity”

Ann Manders is managing the different restorations at Mill Wood. We have now completed two small projects, one at the top and one at the bottom. The silt trap has been completed to manage the water arriving from Patcombe Farm. Even in old maps it appears the water would pick up silt from the marshy area above the grotto, and deliver this into the lakes below. The lowest pond had silted up so much, and caused flooding onto the Goathurst road beyond the hedge, that the farmers in the 1950's used new pipes to take the water into the ditch. This rendered the old roadside brick cascade redundant, and this slowly began to break and disappeared into the hedge.

This cascade would have been an important signal to a traveller along the road into Goathurst, a symbol of man's intervention in nature, suggesting that what lies beyond the hedge is not just a dark wood, but a lost Arcadian world of ruins and Ozymandian vanity. Under Ann's watchful management, the Bristol architects Architecton and the stone mason Mike Orchard, have re-created the brick cascade, which consists of 2 arches, one upon another, with rather fascinating engineering behind it. The water currently flows out of the lower arch, but when we eventually get to work on the lower pond, by de-silting it, and restoring the original level, perhaps 75cm higher, then the water will once more flow as originally planned, proudly and very visibly out of the upper arch.



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Ann, Architecton and Mike Orchard are now focussed on one of our biggest challenges at Mill Wood, the restoration of the Bath Stone Bridge. This has been crumbling, due to many reasons – known and unknown, and has become our greatest priority. The structural engineers feel we

may lose it in the next few years, and so we now have the planning permission to make a full restoration. This work has started and will continue over the winter. We look forward to reporting back to readers next year.

My Gardening Life with Ground Elder and Other Plants

Diana Hebditch explains why she loves her garden

When I was very young my parents suggested I had a little garden and plant some annuals. Poppies and cornflowers bloomed. Oh so pretty and I love them to this day. And then horror of horrors the next year it was overgrown with ground elder – or Bishop’s Weed as my Grandpa

called it. I studiously dug it out and was rewarded with more vigorous growth the next and subsequent years. So began my love of gardening and my history with the weed.

Fast forward to my present garden with its well established shrubs underplanted with hardy cyclamen and yes, ground elder. As with many others, my first proper garden was when I married and shared the farmhouse kitchen garden with my in-laws. Any hoeing was accompanied by comparing vegetable production and weed and pests’ damage - mainly rabbits, but this year I have had to share my chrysanthemums with deer.

Now I have the whole garden to manage and I am thankful for the ‘good bones’ created by two generations of keen lady gardeners. I can now make my contribution. Firstly with trees. A line of horse chestnuts are now 20 years old and I hope they will survive the diseases threatening the species. I carried many buckets of





“I have discovered that courgettes and pumpkins make good ground cover”

water to get them established in their early years when drought threatened. This year, I have planted a *Parrotia persica* which I first saw on a SGT visit to Camerton and I am enjoying its first Autumn colour. A rampant and outsize *Cupressus* has been removed, replanted with various *Viburnums* and *Peonies*. There were two surprises: good news a *Clematis* Jackmanii not seen in flower for many a summer has

flourished and you guessed it, the bad news was the ground elder loves it.

I love growing our vegetables and have picked up many an idea on a SGT visit. It can be a little dispiriting when their gardens are so neat and tidy, but I have discovered that courgettes and pumpkins make good ground cover, providing there is someone who you can pass on excess produce to.

Gardening is a pleasure despite the ground elder and as I make it a rule never to notice weeds in someone else's garden, I hope you will do the same should you be invited to look around mine.

Oh and I've got bindweed too.

SGT Council Meeting Report

Mervyn Wilson describes the latest discussions

The Council met at Mallet Court on 21 October. Nine members were present, five unable to attend. Among matters considered was raising the annual subscription, at present £10. Most other county trusts are at £15 or £20. At present it only just covers our basic costs. It was resolved to take no action now, but to consider a rise next year.

The Chairman reported a successful year of events. She also welcomed the proposed move of the national archive of Parks and Gardens Trust to Hestercombe - quite a catch for Somerset. She spoke of progress in achieving a County register with a

complete list of the important parks and gardens, that is also of easier access through digitalisation, thanks to Ian Clark.

“On surveys: that at Burton Pynsent is recently completed”

On surveys: that at Burton Pynsent is recently completed; one at Mellis Manor in progress. She called for volunteers to carry out surveys.

Stuart Senior gave the current financial position. This is healthy. Events showed an appropriate surplus, capital values were holding up, as was membership income.

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Annual membership is now 258, one up from March 2016, Life membership 76.

Diana Hebditch reported that plans for 2017 are well under way and will be as usual communicated in early 2017.

Sheila Rabson, Chairman Education Group, reported one grant application, Mark, C of E primary school. The next South West Conference will be at Sherborne Castle Garden Centre, in the Butterfly Room.



Christopher Bond asked for suggestions of articles for future issues. Various gardens were suggested: Ston Easton, Hadspen, Sherborn Garden (Litton); also put in short quirky pieces; Sheila Rabson spoke of a clergyman who bred snowdrops in his garden, individual flowers, each marked with a small cross.

We are always concerned to make ourselves better known. It was suggested we might take a stand at the Taunton Flower Show next year. An article might also be offered to Parish Magazines, Cicely Taylor offered to write it.

These are among the matters discussed, and the proposals for action.

The Council next meets in March 2017.

A letter to the Editors

Dear Editors

I enjoy the good rich loam at my feet; my branches flourished and grew fine fruit for my owner in my very first year; he was encouraged but did not appreciate my vigour – so he cut off all my new growth. Understandably I sulked the next year and he threatened to dig me up! Fortunately wiser counsel prevailed and next year he cut only the old wood – I really showed my appreciation for that. Then a new smart garden designer came – and cut off all my new growth again! What am I to do? Please help.

A sad cultivated blackberry.

The Editors sympathize. They realize that communication with humans is difficult. A Christmas present of a book on pruning perhaps?



Autumn Vine



Growing Patagonian Plants in my Garden

Hilary Little shows how you can visit without travelling there

Having spent nearly 25 years travelling in Patagonia in search of plants, it is probably only natural that my husband and I should want to grow some of them at home. Most of the shrubs and trees are grouped in the South-West corner of our garden which is naturally damper than elsewhere in our rather dry, South-facing site. We are just off the Mendip limestone on Keuper marl and the soil is fertile with a pH of 6.5 to 7. Many Patagonian plants grow on acid soils of volcanic origin but will happily tolerate neutral to slightly acid soils.

“Chilean rainforest plants with brilliant, flame-coloured tubular flowers pollinated by hummingbirds”

Foremost amongst the trees we grow is the ‘Monkey Puzzle’, which reminds me of the extensive *Araucaria araucana* forest in Neuquen, in Northern Patagonia. Our specimen was planted 6 years ago and is now about 8’ tall. Nearby, *Luma apiculata*, a tree from the Argentine and Chilean Lake Districts, is well-established and bears a profusion of small white flowers in



Mitrarhia coccinea

Summer. When fully mature, it has a lovely smooth, coppery-red bark, surprisingly cold to the touch. Behind it is a very dwarf *Nothofagus pumilio*, a Southern beech. A small tree from southern Chile with attractive pinnate leaves is *Lomatia ferruginea*. It carries racemes of yellowish-orange flowers in May. I have tried *Embothrium coccineum*, the Chilean flame tree over the years but it has proved to be fairly short-lived, although it grows happily in parts of the South-West and also in South-West Scotland, due mainly to the influence of the Gulf Stream.

Several familiar shrubs come from South America and are widely established in



cultivation, such as *Berberis darwinii*, *Buddleja globosa* with bright orange spherical flowers, *Fuchsia magellanica*, of which we grow both the red and the white-flowered forms, and a subspecies, *Fuchsia magellanica* var *molinae* which has dainty pink flowers. Other less well-known shrubs in our garden are *Mitraria coccinea* and *Desfontainia spinosa*, both Chilean rainforest plants with brilliant, flame-coloured tubular flowers pollinated by hummingbirds. *Ugni molinae* is a member of the myrtle family and has little white bell-shaped blooms. *Azara lanceolata*, another Chilean rain forest shrub, basks in a large tub against the south-facing house wall and is covered in tiny, yellow powder-puffs in spring.

“*Oxalis adenophylla* flourishes in dry soils under a blue cedar”

Elsewhere in the garden, in troughs and in the alpine house I grow some of the smaller plants from the Patagonian mountains and steppes. Here *Petunia patagonica* and *Fabiana foliosa*, both members of *Solanaceae*, the potato family, grow and bear their slightly sinister, veined flowers. Several species of *Oxalis* do well in gritty soils, including, *O. eneaphylla*, various colour forms of *O. laciniata*, and magenta-flowered *O. squamata* which seeds around. *Oxalis adenophylla* flourishes in dry soils under a blue cedar. Various species of *Junellia*, dwarf shrubs in the *Verbena* family have sweetly-



Calceolaria corymbosa

scented flowers and like a well-drained, gritty soil. Several species of *Calceolaria*, a widespread genus in South America, grow happily in similar conditions either in pots or in the open, their attractive golden-yellow pouches brightening up a dull day. *Ourisia coccinea* prefers a shady, damp spot, as do other small, scarlet-flowered members of the rainforest such as *Asteranthera ovata* and *Sarmienta repens*. Bulbs, such as species of *Rhodophiala* with red or magenta flowers, like the protection of a frame as does *Olsynium junceum*, a member of *Iridaceae*, which puts up flower-bearing spikes with pink or white petals in Summer.

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Tending these brings back many happy memories and I can almost pretend I am back in Patagonia!

Editors Note; Readers will remember the enticing article that Dr Little wrote on her travels in Patagonia in the Spring edition of the Magazine.

Festival to honour Shepton Mallet's Snowdrop King

Dominic Weston describes a snowdrop pioneer

Snowdrops originate in the Caucasus and were greatly sought after in the wild by the specialist plant hunters of the past, but it took a country gentleman living quietly in Somerset to hybridise them and breed new varieties.

James Allen (1832-1906), an amateur horticulturalist from the market town of Shepton Mallet, created more than 100

“...celebrate his enthusiasm and passion with the planting of tens of thousands of Snowdrops across the town”

new varieties of Snowdrop and possessed the largest collection of the plants in England at the time. In 1891 he was invited to address the inaugural Snowdrop Conference of the Royal Horticultural Society.

His presentation hints at how intimidating it must have been for a humble man to speak before the great horticultural experts of the day.

“As I know nothing of botany, I must ask you to bear with me in the use of unscientific terms when speaking of the various Snowdrops. I cannot give you any information as to how



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many species of Snowdrops have been described and allowed by the best authorities, neither can I tell you the points that constitute a species, or that separate one species from another. What I propose to do is to attempt to describe, in homely language, the various Snowdrops that have come under my own observation”.

He describes a lengthy procession of Snowdrop varieties and their preferred habitats, and it is clear that he is perfectly besotted with the plants, even mentioning that he has heard of a pink flowered variety but has never seen it. He concludes with the sad observation that his collection has been subject to disease but says “*A faint heart never made a good gardener.*”

Allen’s collection was indeed fatally damaged by botrytis and narcissus fly, but his obsession with the Snowdrop formed

the basis of the many hybrids now available to collectors. Two very special varieties bred by him still exist – Merlin and Magnet - and he would surely be delighted to know that the RHS has now awarded both its Award of Garden Merit.

Shepton Mallet Horticultural Society is to honour this remarkable and humble man by establishing an annual Snowdrop Festival in his memory; the first will take place on 17, 18, 19 February 2017, and will celebrate his enthusiasm and passion with the planting of tens of thousands of Snowdrops across the town, a plant sale in the Market Place, displays in local shops, an art exhibition and Snowdrop walks in the countryside. For more information go to <http://www.sheptonhortsoc.org.uk/whats-on>

Our Garden Challenge at Little Naish

Anne Hills remembers moving into a house and garden unlived in for 25 years

As I sit here watching the two Lawson Cyprus bend and wave alarmingly with the force of the wind, I feel confident that the 10ft. walls of this centuries old garden, are protecting its contents yet again from being uprooted and scattered.

Sited along the ridge, in North Somerset, running from Failand to one of King Arthur’s Camps at Cadbury, the buildings and fields are subjected to the full force of the Bristol Channel weather. Half metre thick stone walls enclose two walled

gardens, and one of the walls forms the backbone of the house and tower that we live in.

“ Since the Spring of 2013, our approach to reclaiming the overgrown garden has been patience and extreme caution”

Since the Spring of 2013, our approach to reclaiming the overgrown garden has been patience and extreme caution. It was

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possibly our only option as the budget is miniscule and the two ‘head gardeners’ are not getting any younger.

We limited ourselves to weeding, well-researched pruning, seed and cuttings collecting and of course mowing the acres of grass.

Having lived for years almost next door to the RHS Garden at Wisley and never having used their plant identification service, we now regularly send photos and samples of bulbs and shrubs that we discover surviving in the walled gardens and fields.

One such find was in the top right field, in the aerial photograph. On first sight it appeared to be a daffodil with a bizarre virus problem. After consulting the RHS,

“Our freezer is full of summer puddings and the wood-burning stove consumes home-grown coppiced Hazelwood.”

we think it is a cultivar called ‘Telemonius Plenus’. Apparently colonies persist in old orchards and could date back to the end of the 19th century, when a fashion for daffodils was renewed by a series of National Conferences held by the RHS.

Telemonius Plenus appears to derive from *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. It is variable in form, typically with the corona entire and



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trumpet like, in some flowers, with extra segments or split open in others and looking ‘mop headed’ with segments spilling out.

Broadleigh Gardens, Taunton, have a picture of it on their website listed as ‘Narcissus Van Sion’ – the original double yellow daffodil dating from pre-1620.

For centuries, the purpose of the walled gardens and out-buildings was to enable fruit and vegetables to be grown for the tables of the rest of the Naish Estate, free from deer and badger invasions. The extensive orchards of the 19th century, now depleted to about 12 fruit bearing trees, have allowed us to plant ‘favourite’ saplings which will give striking leaf and bark colour in the years to come. These include *Acer griseum*, Liquid Amber, Snakes bark Maple and *Cercidiphyllum magnifolium*.

A recent Christmas present caused a lot of muddy digging and marking out, all because we wished to extend the visual life of three Silver Birches planted by a well in

the 1960’s, which would be much missed by the gold finches and by us in the Summer when the sun is high in the sky and the tree canopies shade out the glare. The trio of mature birches will now be surrounded by five *Betula utilis* ssp. *Jacquemontii* ‘Snow Leopard’, as a small woodland backdrop.

I think that it is fair to say that the labour intensive market garden that flourished here 100 years ago, is gradually giving way to flower beds and decorative trees.

We have introduced *Miscanthus nepalensis* and *Calamagrostis* ‘Carl Foerster’ as non-invasive grasses that sit well with *Achilleas*, *Echinaceas* and *Alstromeras* to give long periods of attention free colour and form.

Having said all of that, I would hate to give the impression that we are supermarket dependent. Our freezer is full of summer puddings and the wood-burning stove consumes home-grown coppiced Hazelwood.

Lonicera cilosa

Anthony Pugh-Thomas enjoys a very therapeutic and useful plant

I grew this particularly beautiful Honeysuckle from seed: it is an accommodating plant, happy in acid, neutral or alkaline soils, sun or semi-shade and can scramble up to 32 feet. But I did not know and was intrigued to discover

that it has edible, medicinal and practical uses. Although the fruit can be eaten raw or cooked it is not as attractive as the nectar that children enjoy sucking from the base of the flowers. (Members who joined the visit to the Hillier Arboretum last year will remember being invited to suck the nectar from a clump of Red Hot Pokers).



It has medicinal uses too. The leaves are contraceptive and tonic and a decoction can be used to treat colds and, so it is said, tuberculosis. A poultice of bruised leaves can be applied to bruises and an infusion of the woody parts has been drunk in small amount or used as a bath to treat epilepsy. With the NHS about to run out of money, every little helps.

If you prefer professional medical advice to home help remedies you could instead

use an infusion as a hair shampoo - one that makes the hair grow, so it is said. And should you find yourself marooned where the Honeysuckle grows but household accessories are in short supply, you can use the stems to support a suspension ridge across any river or canyon that you may need to cross or to make a pliable ladder or to tie together the poles for a rustic cottage.

You should clearly never be without one in your garden.

Editors Note: Anthony Pugh-Thomas disclaims all responsibility for the consequences of trying any of these recipes!

“Although the fruit can be eaten raw or cooked it is not as attractive as the nectar that children enjoy sucking from the base of the flowers.”



Some Highlights from our 2016 Events

Hartwood House in May



With the *Davidia involucrata* ‘handkerchief’ tree in full bloom, David and Rosemary Freemantle showed us their wide range of interesting species and cultivars.

A coach trip to Oxfordshire in June



Three varied gardens with a surprise guided tour of Broughton Castle borders by Lord Saye and Sele himself.



Some Highlights from our 2016 Events

Encombe House in June



A SGT visit often entails a little bit of a walk, but a warm welcome awaited us and a beautiful flower and kitchen garden.

Bowood House in September



A Capability Brown landscape and a kitchen garden packed with interest.

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Protecting Historic Parks and Gardens

Is it a Piece of Cake, or not? asks Anne Hills

The recipe for a successful day out, where you came away with useful knowledge, acquired hands on experience, exchanged information with like minded new colleagues and listened to expert operatives currently defending the future of our historic parks and gardens, was to choose a venue – Westonbirt House, be escorted round the landscape by the former head gardener, who happened to have chosen a bright, dry Autumn day, and also have the best selection of Westonbirt in-house baked cakes ever.

The first speaker was David Lambert, historic landscape consultant and the Gardens Trust's Conservation Committee member. He spoke about the 'threats' to our historic landscape citing the recent controversial permission to allow 'Glamping' constructions within the landscape of Petworth House. Although 'No one owns the landscape', we all have an obligation to protect our national heritage. As 'designated heritage assets' registered parks and gardens have a high status within the planning system. Referring to the Petworth House application decision, it was clear that the significance, or the value of the heritage asset to this and future generations, can be at odds with the current financial and commercial survival of the heritage asset. To relate that to CGT's who will be dealing with applications concerning Grade II sites

and locally listed assets, David stressed the importance of supporting our local conservation officers who with the letter from a CGT that represents local and

“the letter from a CGT that represents local and research based historical knowledge, can make all the difference to the planning outcome.”

research based historical knowledge, can make all the difference to the planning outcome.

Margie Hoffnung, the Gardens Trust Conservation Officer and previously Westonbirt Head Gardener, took us on a tour of the school grounds. At certain points of the garden tour, Margie and Linden set us all a 'planning dilemma' question. When we reached a rocky outcrop, and remember, we are simultaneously in a registered landscape and school grounds, we were asked to consider if we would support the school if it applied for planning permission to make this area into an 'adventure playground'. Heated debate, divided result, just like the real thing!

Another speaker advised that local groups [CGT's], volunteers and conservation

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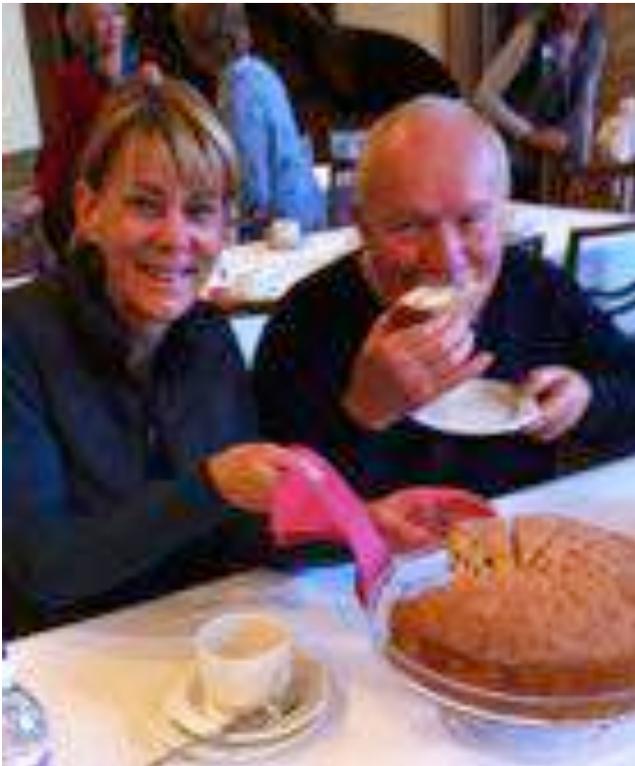


students should draw up a management plan to start the process of protecting unregistered assets. The Kings Weston Action Group came to mind as a successful example.

The final speaker, Kim Auston, Historic England, Landscape Architect SW and WM, gave a talk entitled *“Is it a question of taste?”*

He walked away with the ‘best cake’ references of the day. Also, I listened very

attentively when I realized that one of his case studies was Ashton Court – a pre-app proposal that had been referred to Avon



Gardens Trust, for a cycle path across a Grade II* registered landscape and the front of Ashton Court. He quoted Boris Johnson, *“Cake Policy – pro having it and pro eating it”*. The audience contained many heritage defenders who were also cyclists, so Kim’s request for a show of hands as to whether planning permission should be granted or not, resulted in a 50/50 split!

“A compromise is to divide the cake in such a way as everyone thinks they have the bigger piece”.

Thank you to Linden, Margie and Tamsin of The Gardens Trust, for organizing such a successful ‘Historic Project Training Day’.



The English Landscape Park at Laxenburg near Vienna

Frederica Coker explores an unexpected garden

Laxenburg, which was used by members of the House of Habsburg as one of their residences from about 1306, is to the South of Vienna. As we enter the Park the undulating path takes us over extensive meadows and we catch glimpses of the Old Castle in between clumps of trees. A short walk takes us to two temples, a lake with Franz's Castle, a knights' pillar and numerous other eclectic buildings, follies or *staffage* structures.

We first learn about an ornamental garden, in addition to the customary hunting park, in the sixteenth century. Empress Maria Theresia (1717-1780) imposed 'Baroque order' on the Park by creating an axial layout. Over the years, more land was acquired and more garden-making took place. Her son, who became Joseph II (1741-1790) and Holy Roman Emperor, was regarded as an 'enlightened emperor'; he yearned for a garden in the English style, having heard about this new style of garden and visited *Erménonville* in France. He commissioned a French architect working at the Court in Vienna, Isidore Marcell Amand Ganneval (1730-1786), to design an *englische Garten*. The architect proposed to enhance the existing formal garden by adding an English style garden around it, rather than replacing the old garden. Three natural

looking areas were actually added by him, but at this stage the intended transformation into an *englische Garten* left Laxenburg essentially untouched. Ganneval left gaps between the trees, thus retaining views of the Vienna woods, so much loved by the Viennese, and the snow-capped *Schneeberg* in the foothills of the Alps.

“A Gothick bridge and other buildings in the Gothick style were erected, even an arena where ‘knights’ in medieval costume formed a procession on horseback for specific occasions.”

Joseph II was succeeded by his nephew Franz, who became Franz I of Austria (1768–1835) and who married Maria Thèrese of Bourbon-Sicily (1772–1807), born and brought up in Naples, the granddaughter of the Viennese Maria. Not satisfied with the *englische Garten* created by Ganneval, the Empress instigated in 1798 the erection of follies, in the areas 'improved' by him. Thus a fishing village,

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a hermitage, a Chinese bridge, a Turkish mosque and several more structures appeared. At the same time, the Emperor who was a trained gardener and who became known as the 'Blumenkaiser' (flower emperor), decided to create an *englische Garten* and to embellish it with buildings in the chivalric style. A hydraulics engineer from Antwerp, in the Austrian Netherlands, was commissioned to make a lake and islands in it and architects designed a new castle, named Franz's Castle. A Gothic bridge and other buildings in the Gothic style

were erected, even an arena where 'knights' in medieval costume formed a procession on horseback for specific occasions. Naturalistic plantings and winding paths appeared. All the *staffage* structures conceived by the Emperor and his advisers still exist today, while those made of wood for the Empress perished soon. The public were given access to the gardens even when the chivalric areas were a building site. Today the gardens form a park that is always open to the public.

The Somerset Gardens Trust



Financial Outcome 2015/16

Honorary Treasurer Stuart Senior reviews the Trust's Accounts

As I forecast at last year's AGM at Halswell Park, the absence of a multi-day tour and a plant sale, coupled with the expenses of our Anniversary Party, meant that the net monies yielded by our fund raising activities were dramatically down on the previous year: £748 vs. £7,786. In addition the costs of the large format anniversary magazine and associated postage, plus a substantial reduction in the



value of our investment (which more or less cancelled the previous year's gain) both contributed to a loss of £3,819 for the year and a corresponding reduction in our total funds to £53,434.

But as I mentioned at this year's AGM at Yarlington, the prospects for the 2016/17 year are much improved. Camilla and John's Cornish tour raised £2,671 and the self-drive visits have raised over £1,300. In addition, in these strange post-referendum

times, our investment has more than recovered the loss sustained last year.

At Yarlington I also made the point that it is not the purpose of our Trust to generate surpluses. We exist to "*promote the education of the public on matters connected with the arts and sciences of garden landscapes and to preserve, enhance and recreate for the education*

“Camilla and John's Cornish tour raised £2,671 and the self-drive visits have raised over £1,300.”

and enjoyment of the public whatever garden landscapes may exist or have existed in or around the County of Somerset”. In short, we exist to raise funds **and** to spend them.

So far this year we have made education grants totalling £2,750 to ten primary schools: a grant of £1,000 has also been made to Halswell and we will be giving bursaries to students at Cannington. Your Council will continue to be very receptive to further requests for grants and bursaries to fund activities which are consistent with our purpose as set out above.

The Somerset Gardens Trust



Monkton Elm Garden Centre, near Taunton

Founder David Bellman describes how a leading Somerset Garden Centre has to continuously adapt to survive

Our independent, family owned Garden Centre has evolved from a tomato nursery that we acquired in 1979, which provided an ideal opportunity to extend our first hand farming experience, gained farming cattle and growing coffee in Kenya for

“we have developed with demand from a small nursery specialising in quality plants, to a leading 21st century destination garden centre.”



over 20 years. Even in the early days the entire family was involved, picking, grading and packing tomatoes, together with the occasional sibling tomato fight.

We made the decision to diversify in 1982, when imports of cheap tomatoes from Holland made the crop uneconomic. We felt selling plants was a natural progression, and from those early days we have developed with demand from a small nursery specialising in quality plants, to a leading 21st century destination garden centre. It is important to us to remain true to our ethos of always offering the best quality we can, using local suppliers wherever possible.

Much of the redevelopment work over the years has been carried out by us, using

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local professionals and suppliers when possible. The nursery continued to expand throughout the 1980's and by the mid-'90's the evolution of out of town garden centres had really captured the public's imagination, so we continued to develop the site, including revamping our plant area. Monkton Elm has always been proud to source the very best plants and this will remain the core of our business. We have knowledgeable and friendly staff who have worked with us for many years.

During the 'noughties' we expanded again, by joining the lower and upper buildings together to increase our range of products and providing a truly enjoyable experience for customers and families alike; and now, over the last couple of years, we have invested in a brand new state of the art restaurant. It is important to look to the future.

Looking back over the last 34 years, it is hard to believe it all evolved from a small tomato nursery.

Gardening in Woodland

The Editors explain their experience

It is an odd idea to do so – they are different habitats with different needs – one planned, the other natural; but why should we accept this division? Why not take garden plants to woodland clearings, or at least tree shade, which many of us have in our gardens?

So when we planted some new trees we deliberately left a clearing in the middle. In this we put a liner to suppress the weeds with soil on top. We knew that Spring flowers would do best before the leaves appeared so in went the *Pulmoneria*, the *Brunnera*, *Vinca*, lily of the valley and *Erythroniums*; for Summer shade loving *Geraniums* and *Dicentra* with *Rhododendrons* in acid pits; near disaster – a dry Summer when they were exposed to full sunlight, and the trees took all the moisture, killed the lilies and left most of the others as dried leaves. Watering plants in tree shade is strange; however some

survived and prospered in following years as the new trees grew taller; and now they have naturalized and invaded the new wood in heavier shade. Of all our successes the *Hellebores* and *Epimediums* are best.

Encouraged by this experience, we became more ambitious. We made a pond in laurel shade where the *Primulas*, *Rodgersias* and *Astilbes* thrive on the margins; we found some ferns which only wanted dry shade – the denser the better; we made a jungle garden in a wood clearing with many varieties of bamboo (one is 25 feet tall now) and *Trachycarpus* palms (only the bananas failed despite their Winter wrappings); we made a *Prunus* glade (*Taihaku*) – whose great white single blooms are wonderful for two weeks in Spring, and we have just started an orchard and ornamental tree planting where we cut down a quarter acre of mature trees to let in the light.

So next time a tree falls opening up a hole in the canopy, go for it!



Autumn Leaves

Whirling,
spinning just beyond my reach
tantalizing me.
I stop and wait for more
my cupped hands ready.
Leaves falling all around -
a gentle plopping -
but not on me.
Frustration!
A season's good luck lost.

Spectacular -
the butter yellow ash,
the burnt orange maple,
the dull plum euonymous,
the fiery copper beech -
and those that simply drop,
all retreating to their inner core,
withdrawing life from their extremities,
waiting for harsh winter weather.

Anticipation -
the oak tree sculptures
trunks long hidden behind green walls;
the elder's crazy tufts of green
resisting all the cold;
the bright berries, red and black -
a birds' feast;
the tight knit hedges
showing their ivy ribs;
the great firs in their green glory
stand proud in the desolate wood;
the wide skies opened by the fall
so I can see the starling roost.

A new clean world,

Autumn leaves long gone for compost
Just a delicacy for worms!
Forget the fireworks,
now for nature in the raw.

Christopher Bond





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Front Cover: Courtesy of the Editors

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